



A Decade of Faithful Advocacy on Fossil Fuels

By Sr. Jessica Zimmerle

The image was startling and will remain with me for the rest of my life.

On an overcast day in September of 2012, Lummi Nation hosted a gathering on the beach at *Xwe'chi'eXen*, Cherry Point. Ancestors were acknowledged, songs and stories were shared, and a sense of calm anticipation balanced by fierce determination came over the crowd.

Lummi Elders, elected leaders, and youth stood in a line after being presented with ceremonial blankets. Behind them was the Salish Sea, the source of Lummi lifeway and spirituality. Before them was a large cardboard check that had the words "NON-NEGOTIABLE" painted across the middle. Below that was a sign with "COAL TRAIN" crossed out in a big red X. In front of that sign, logs were stacked for a fire.

Xwe'chi'eXen, a sacred site revered by the Lummi people as the home of the Ancient Ones, was the proposed location of what would have been North America's largest coal export terminal. Lummi leaders named this proposal analogous to construction on Arlington National Cemetery. In a sad attempt at compensation, SSA Marine had offered Lummi Nation less than one million

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We also support houses of worship!
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ABOUT US

Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light (WAIPL) 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/WAIPL 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 environmental justice issues.

Earth Ministry/WAIPL 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 INTERIM EDITOR

This issue of *Earth Letter* tackles an issue that has enmeshed itself deeply into our modern lives in the United States – fossil fuels. The industry behind fossil fuels has tendrils in so much of what we interact with or use on a daily basis, yet we know we can choose a world without the dependence we've built.

In this edition of *Earth Letter* our Goings-On shares the many ways Earth Ministry/WAIPL is directly involved in active campaigns to regulate and reduce use of fossil fuels. Rev. Dr. Marilyn Cornwell and Maddie Smith reflect on the broader implications of fossil fuel on matters of intersectional justice, and Freddie Lane takes us on a deeper dive into the industry's violation of treaty rights. Finally, Joelle Novey, Director of the Interfaith Power & Light affiliate in the "other" Washington (D.C.), helps us envision a future without fossil fuels.

In addition, as Earth Ministry/WAIPL itself is transitioning, Sr. Jessica Zimmerle offers a 10-year retrospective, as Board Chair Rev. Laura Baumgartner and Interim Executive Director Nancy Osborn Nicholas give readers a peek into the future of the organization.

As always, this issue is packed with inspiration, resources, and concrete tips on how to lean in and grow into commitments to the earth and all its beloved inhabitants. As we continue through halting and uneven progress of returning to a more socially-connected life, it is as important as ever to be reminded that none of our work is in isolation. Every voice counts, and we raise ours with yours.

Warmly,

GOINGS-ON

at Earth Ministry/
WA IPL

Earth Ministry/WA IPL relies on donations from individuals like you to make this important work possible. Every gift helps us engage people of faith in stewardship of creation and environmental justice! You can make a donation or sign up for monthly giving at www.earthministry.org or by calling (206) 632-2426. Thank you for your support!

Welcoming New Staff

This fall, Earth Ministry/WA IPL joyously welcomed new program staff together with our Interim Executive Director, Nancy Osborn Nicholas. Nancy will be supporting Earth Ministry/WA IPL through this season of transition as we seek a new permanent Executive Director (read more on pages 12-13). Bolstering our program work, Keah Calluccie has stepped into a new role of Multifaith Outreach Coordinator; Lindsay Bell is with us for a year through the Episcopal Diocese's Seattle Service Corps; and, Sr. Dorothy Verna has joined the team through the Jesuit Volunteer EnCorps program. It's an exciting time of growth for Earth Ministry/WA IPL!



From left to right Nancy O. Nicholas, Sr. Dorothy Verna, Lindsay Bell, Maddie Smith, Keah Calluccie, Sr. Jessica Zimmerle

Fossil Fuels in Tacoma

This fall marked the culmination of years of community advocacy on fossil fuels in Tacoma.

After four years of renewing temporary protections every 6 months, the Tacoma City Council passed long-term Non-Interim Regulations that ensure that no new fossil fuel facilities can be built on the Tideflats. Though not as strong as we

wanted, it is a win that existing fossil fuel infrastructure cannot expand unless it's part of a "Cleaner Fuels" blend, and even then expansion is limited. We look forward to continuing to engage on this issue in new ways through the Tacoma Tideflats Subarea Plan.

We are incredibly disappointed in the Pollution Control Hearings Board's (PCHB) decision to uphold the clean air permits for Puget Sound Energy's immortal Tacoma LNG facility. The PCHB failed to make the right decision to require further review of this dirty and dangerous fracked gas project as requested by the Puyallup Tribe and environmental co-litigants. People of faith have been in a prayerful stance of solidarity with the Tribe and will continue to do so if this decision is appealed and taken to a higher court.



Red Road to D.C. Totem Pole Journey

Over the summer, members of Lummi Nation embarked on the national Red Road to D.C. Totem Pole Journey. Leading up to the official tour, the totem pole was blessed at events across the West Coast – many in partnership with spiritual communities. On its national tour, the Totem Pole Journey visited Native Nations leading efforts to protect sacred places across the country as they traveled to deliver the pole to the Biden-Harris Administration. See pages 8-9 to read

GOINGS-ON at Earth Ministry/WAIPL

Lummi leader Freddie Lane's reflection on the journey.

Earth Ministry/WAIPL staff and board participated in four Totem Pole Journey events. We marched through downtown Seattle with Native leaders, attended an interfaith blessing in Bellingham, and staffed a prayer and action table in Bellevue and Lewiston/Clarkston. We are grateful to have been invited to support the ongoing leadership of Lummi Nation as they continue to draw attention to the moral and legal obligation to protect sacred places under threat from resource extraction and industrial development.

The Shmita Project Northwest

Earth Ministry/WAIPL is partnering with Congregation Beth Shalom to co-create the Shmita Project Northwest. This collaboration seeks to educate, inspire, and build community around bringing to life the values of Shmita, the sabbath of the land and release from debt that Torah calls for every seven years. We were honored that the Shmita Project Northwest received the top recognition from the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's 2021 Idea Generator Visionary Awards!

In the spring we co-hosted a distinguished speaker series with nationally renowned Jewish leaders speaking about approaching the Shmita Year – check out the recordings at earthministry.org/the-shmita-project-northwest. After the Jewish new year in September, members of the growing Shmita Project Northwest community gathered in the sukkah at Congregation Beth Shalom for a Shmita Year Opening Festival. It was a lovely time



Shmita Year Opening Festival attendees gathered in the sukkah at Congregation Beth Shalom.

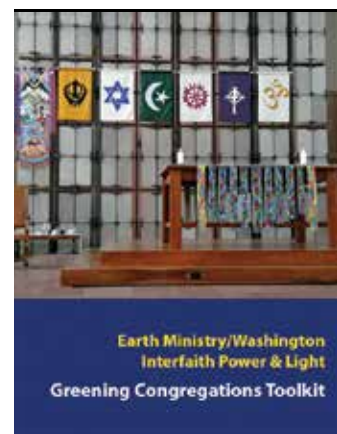
of conversation and connection around how we will creatively bring to life Shmita values.

This project is ongoing and expanding as Jewish congregations and organizations are joining us as official partners. If your or your community would like to get involved with the Shmita Project Northwest, please email Keah@earthministry.org.

Multifaith Greening Congregations Toolkit

To align with our increasingly multifaith identity, Earth Ministry/WAIPL has produced a multifaith version of our Greening Congregations Toolkit. This resource provides an overview of how to become an Earth Ministry/WAIPL's Greening Congregation and includes ideas and inspiration to help existing Green Teams continue to think creatively about living into your mission statements. Sections include theological grounding for environmental action, five areas of congregational greening, success stories, and application templates.

Earth Ministry/WAIPL's Greening Congregations Toolkit has evolved with us over the years to remain relevant and support your good work. This first multifaith expansion adds sections with specific Jewish and Christian theological grounding and uses more inclusive language throughout. It also contains resources that resonate across spiritual traditions, and the Greening Congregations process can be applied in any setting.



Our plan is to continue to build out this resource to represent the growing spiritual and cultural diversity of our community.

To download a free digital copy of Earth Ministry/WAIPL's Multifaith Greening Congregations Toolkit visit our website at earthministry.org/greening-congregations-toolkit. This resource is provided as a PDF to reduce paper consumption.

Big Wins Protecting WA from PFAS Chemicals

Earlier this year, over 130 people of faith asked the Department of Ecology to speed up the phase out of toxic PFAS chemicals in food packaging. In fact, the Earth Ministry/WAIPL community comprised 82% of the total comments submitted! Thanks to your advocacy, the Department responded positively and cited stakeholder input in their decision to speed up their timeline. Now the second assessment of safe food packing without PFAS will be published by the end of 2021 instead of mid-2022. This action was a follow-up to the Healthy Food Packaging Act that Earth Ministry/WAIPL helped pass in 2018.

Later this summer, the Earth Ministry/WAIPL community also submitted comments to the Washington Department of Health asking for strong protections from PFAS in drinking water. On October 13, the WA Board of Health approved drinking water standards

for five separate types of PFAS! Large water systems are now required to test for these toxic chemicals, which will make a real difference in lowering community exposure. Many thanks to all in the Earth Ministry/WAIPL community who spoke out faithfully during this multi-year process.

Clean Cars 2030 and COP26

The Earth Ministry/WAIPL Community has been joining our voices with coalition partners to hold our state and national leaders accountable to meaningful climate action.

Over 320 people of faith signed Earth Ministry/WAIPL's Clean Cars 2030 petition calling on the Governor to enact via executive order a 2030 target date for all new vehicles registered in WA to be electric. Community members gathered at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral on a smoky summer day for a rally in support of Clean Cars 2030. It was a perfect location since St. Mark's recently installed an electric vehicle charging station dedicated to Earth Ministry co-founder Jim Mulligan! Together with our partners at Coltura, nearly 1,000 signatures were delivered to the Governor in September.

Later in the fall, over 300 Earth Ministry/WAIPL members added their name to a national faith community letter delivered to the Biden Administration at the COP26 Climate Conference. This letter, coordinated by national Interfaith Power & Light, had a total of 5,000 signatures showing that people of faith across the nation are praying for good, moral leadership of the U.S. government at this critical moment.



Earth Ministry co-founder Ruth Mulligan with members of St. Mark's Creation Care Ministry at the Clean Cars 2030 rally. The Cathedral has committed to going carbon neutral by 2030!

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*Page 8, 9: Sul ka dub (Freddie Lane,
Lummi Nation)*

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GROUNDED IN FAITH

Faith and Fossil Fuels

By Rev. Dr. Marilyn Cornwell

As I write this, wildfires are surging across the western U.S., flash-flooding is scouring cities and fields in the U.S. and other parts of the globe, and another rising heat dome is blanketing much of the U.S., killing creatures, crops, and people. While the sources of this devastation are many, our collective addiction to fossil fuels forms the ground zero of our climate emergency.

The Earth Ministry community has been at the forefront of the global faith-based movement away from reliance on fossil fuels. With coalition partners and frontline communities, Earth Ministry has helped stop over 50 fossil fuel projects around our region from going online. We are currently supporting our tribal partners in their fight to stop the Tacoma Liquid Natural Gas plant permitting process, and with coalition partners, we are creating new rules for fossil fuels that prioritize community health and safety over fossil fuel profits.

What compels us, as a multi-faith community, to address fossil fuels in this defining moment? Across faith traditions, people are called to co-creative stewardship of the divine creation on which all life depends. However, stewardship is more than responsible use and protection of ecosystems for future well-being in a climate-changed world. Faithful stewardship is inherently about justice.

People of faith are called to act for justice for those who disproportionately suffer the ravages of fossil fuel-generated climate change. Our traditions teach us that our decision-making is not just about ourselves, but directly affects our neighbors – human and non-human, sentient and non-sentient.

The call to climate justice means that people of faith embrace intergenerational solidarity and responsibility, facing now the fastest-growing intergenerational inequality the planet has

ever seen. Thus, the movement to keep fossil fuels in the ground is an essential component of co-creating a more just world.

However, I wonder if divesting (in the largest sense) from fossil fuels and creating a renewable energy future is enough to create the sacred justice we imagine. I wonder if, as Gopal Dayaneni of the Movement Generation Justice and Ecology Project has suggested, all these faithful efforts may simply lead to “green” fuel-sustained business as usual, rather than true justice for those marginalized by our overall economic life. How can we avoid this trap? I believe we must do the deeper, harder work of dealing with our addiction to economies that are devastating the planet.

To paraphrase a Wendell Berry poem – faith compels us to walk the rocky and parched hillsides sowing seeds for a just and healthy future we may not live to see. Just as the seed itself must die to be transformed into a living shoot that grows toward the light, we are invited to die to a way of life not in alignment with sacred truth and sacred relationship with the Divine.

We are gifted by divine energy with the ability to exist in a creative tension: compassionate action now for a just and sustainable future and continual transformation, or transfiguration, that new life may arise. We invite you to join the Earth Ministry community in holding this sacred tension. Together, let us trust and pray that a new creation arise and thrive from the ashes of our human hubris. This is our hope, our task and our joy.



The Rev. Dr. Marilyn Cornwell is a retired Episcopal Priest. She serves as a member of the board of Earth Ministry/WAIPL.

Fossil Fuel Divestment is Sacred Work

By Maddie Smith

As a Unitarian Universalist, I always think about key UU principles when engaging in the sacred, spiritual work of resisting new fossil fuel infrastructure and working towards a world without fossil fuels:

Principle #1: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Principle #2: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;

Principle #7: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part;

Principle #8: Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.

Together with other young Unitarian Universalists, I recently took up the important work of asking the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund (UUCEF) and Unitarian Universalist congregations to divest from fossil fuel companies and banks that fund fossil fuel projects, particularly the Line 3 tar sands oil pipeline in Minnesota. Despite a resolution passed at the 2014 Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) General Assembly calling for UU institutions to divest from fossil fuels, this work remains unfinished. Re-awakening the UUA divestment movement came out of the discovery that the UUCEF had holdings in Enbridge, the company building Line 3, and many banks that have loaned billions of dollars to the company. I am involved in this work not in my professional role at Earth Ministry/WAIP, but as a Unitarian Universalist; we cannot remain idle while the UUA and congregational endowments remain invested in these companies.



You may be wondering: What is the connection between divestment and building an anti-racist, multicultural, Beloved Community? The connections between racism, other oppressions, and the climate crisis are clear and frequently talked about in our faith communities. When endowment funds meant to safeguard the future of our faith traditions are used to fund climate destruction, which disproportionately affects people of color, we owe it to future generations to hold our institutions accountable. When our faith traditions name justice and stewardship as core values, it makes sense we'd ask our faith institutions to stop funding companies that blatantly conflict with our values.

Numerous faith institutions across the globe have committed to divestment. These include the Islamic Society of North America, the World Council of Churches, the American Jewish World Service, several Catholic dioceses, and countless houses of worship around the world. Regionally, divestment commitments have been made by the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia and the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church. Divestment continues to be a powerful way for religious institutions to put their faith into action. Every year there are more inspiring announcements about faith institutions choosing to ensure that investments actually represent their values.

I won't pretend that divestment is the solution to the climate crisis, but it is one tool we have to affect the public image of the fossil fuel industry and limit its power as we journey towards a more just society for all of Earth's inhabitants.

Maddie Smith is Earth Ministry/WAIP's Operations Manager. They also provide support for Earth Ministry's faithful advocacy.

Stories from the Red Road to D.C. Totem Pole Journey

By Sul ka dub (Freddie Lane)

It all began on December 2, 2020, after a month of mourning after losing my re-election to the Lummi Council.

I'd phoned Theresa Sheldon about our Red Road to the White House Totem Journey that we'd envisioned after President Biden was elected. We wanted to honor the 46th president if he appointed the first American Indian to his executive cabinet. Theresa and I figured we'd put in the gracious request to Jewell James (*Se-Sealth*, pronounced: Sa-see-alth) to gift a totem pole to the President for such an honorable gesture to Indian Country, hence the Red Road to D.C. Totem Journey was born.

Se-Sealth at first said no, but after the president officially announced Congresswoman Deb Haaland as his nominee for Secretary of the Department of the Interior, things began to fall into place. In February 2021, the Lummi Nation House of Tears Carvers had the 450-year-old western red cedar delivered to the shed and began the task of forming the symbols to adorn this magnificent ancestor.

As the James brothers were starting to put on the first coating of paint, Jewell said to me, "Why don't you see if there are any local tribes or communities that might want to host a blessing before our departure?"

"Okay!" Then I had to ask, "Do you want a Northwest Tour? What about beyond?"

"Well, it's about protecting sacred sites, and we know there are battles happening across the country – so, why not?" he said, smiling at me.

I'd later turn to Jewell's older brother Doug and ask for his thoughts. "Just put it up to the Spirit, son. The Spirit always provides." And Uncle Doug was right.

By the time we got to Washington D.C. we had traveled to over 100 sacred sites, villages, rivers, lakes, seas, oceans, islands,

cities, tribal communities, schools, colleges, universities, and churches from Hollywood Beach in Port Angeles, WA to Hollywood, CA to Hollywood, FL.

Our Red Road Northwest Tour began here at Lummi Nation and had 48 stops from April to late May, traveling to 14 tribes on a five-island tour in our ancestral territory. Our visit with the islanders brought the community together for the first time since the pandemic hit, so our timing for the totem visits were spot on. But the power came from gathering prayers over the totem pole.

"The totem pole isn't what is sacred," said Jewell James. "What is sacred is each and every one of you gathered here today. That's what is sacred," he reminded the crowd. There is a sacredness to humbling your spirit that I felt when coordinating all of the logistics as road manager, fundraiser, driver, speaker, Facebook Live technician, and documentary filmmaker – it was always a challenging balance as a guest in other communities.

This sacred balancing moment came when we visited Chemawa Indian Boarding School Cemetery in north Salem, OR. We'd opened with our usual Red Road Totem Journey customs of a prayer and recognition of tribal leaders



Blessing the totem pole at Chemawa Cemetery.



Sul ka dub at Chaco Canyon

and distinguished guests. The floor was handed off to Jewell James and mid-speech (while I was filming) the 10:20 am train came through Chemawa Station, where tens of thousands of children once departed for Indian Training School. It was a life-changing moment. To me, those children buried at Chemawa Cemetery came Home to listen to the words and the spiritual work that was taking place. A beautiful homecoming song came to me as we departed the school. "Thank you for Remembering Us" was the translation. "Hyshqe, thank you."

It was our ancestors that protected our journey. We felt the spiritual uprising happening today. "Perhaps the great purification is already here," said Doug James (*Sit ki kadem*, pronounced sit-key-ka-dum). Amidst stronger hurricanes and tornadoes, record rainfalls, wildfires burning out of control, "it's a wonder we've gotten this far," added Uncle Doug. "We have one Mother Earth."

"We are all in this together, but we've got to change... otherwise, Mother Earth will just as soon wash us humans away again if we don't take care of her," he'd often say. "Protecting sacred sites is all of our responsibility."

Leaving Washington, we passed through the Snake River Basin traveling south to the border of Idaho and Utah where we stopped and swam at a white sand beach along the Salmon River. Our crew bonded after jumping in the sacred waters – saying, "This is what we protect. We swim for the salmon, for the sacred, and for future generations."

Our visit to the World Heritage Cultural Center of Chaco Canyon was personal. If you haven't been there, go! My heart soars like a hawk to this day after visiting the ancient ones and hearing their whispers in the breeze. It was all but a dream, but the brutal wake up is that over 93% of that area is leased to oil and gas activities.

If you haven't seen our beautiful homelands, take my word, it's worth every mile. Yet our lands are also often the first to be sacrificed for corporate greed and stop after stop we saw the destruction

caused by fossil fuel extraction and its impact on Native communities.

At each stop we also met amazing Indigenous protectors, not protestors, defending their sacred lands and waters. Swimming with Winona LaDuke, leader of the Line 3 resistance, at the headwaters of the Mississippi was most powerful. Her welcome was by the galloping thunder of Water Protectors on horseback, adorning dancing eagle feathers and coyote regalia in a most elegant pride of Native Americana.

We've just witnessed the world's longest totem pole journey: 25,000 miles, really. Yes, really. Our Red Road to D.C. totem pole hasn't found its permanent home yet, but after the 46th President retires, I imagine it raised at his presidential library in Delaware with all 117 scrapbook pages and gifts. Until then, we will continue to go where the Spirit leads us – letting the world know that we are still here.

I close with my parting words from across the miles: 'Hy qwe cha' (pronounced: hi-qwa-cha). It's never goodbye, but Hy qwe cha. Until we see you again, in this world or the next. O' Si'am!

Sul ka dub (Freddie Lane) is a citizen of the Lhaq'temish people enrolled in the Lummi Nation near Bellingham WA. He has been a photographer and documentary filmmaker since 1989 and has traveled with the totem pole journeys since its inception in 2002. Sul ka dub served one term on the Lummi Indian Business Council in 2017 and continues his leadership in public relations with community organizing for social justice & environmental issues. Lane is currently leading efforts for an Indigenous People March on Washington in June of 2024 and assisting the House of Tears Carvers with Red Road Totem Journeys to Hawaii, Snake River and Washington D.C.



Participants at the Totem Pole Journey stop along the Lower Snake River.

When I think about what would have to change to enter a world beyond fossil fuels, I think of a powerful quotation from Pope Benedict from Pope Francis' encyclical teaching on ecology, *Laudato Si*: "the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast."

When we look out at deserts expanding, at storms raging, and fires ravaging because of a climate damaged by our burning of fossil fuels, this teaching suggests that climate change is a symptom of an underlying illness, which we can only diagnose by looking internally. What is the human imbalance to which the climate crisis testifies?

As the Director of the Interfaith Power & Light affiliate in the "other" Washington (D.C.), I have asked this powerful question many times to good folks sitting on folding chairs in the fellowship halls of many congregations: Where do you see the spiritual errors at the heart of the climate crisis in yourself and in your community? If we are going to discern our way forward in a damaged climate, we must be able to look inward, to understand how we are participating in the systems causing harm, to be able to ask: What is our role in this? What is ours to do about it?

In my own Jewish communities, I have found that the sefer Torah (the scrolls on which the Hebrew Bible is hand-written on rolled-up parchment) treasured by every Jewish community is a powerful way into this conversation about where we might spiritually begin a process of climate repair.

If you participate in a Jewish community or have ever visited one for Shabbat services, everything about the layout of the sanctuary and the choreography of the ritual reinforces the sanctity of the sefer Torah. Physically, we adorn the scroll beautifully, carry it carefully, rise when it is taken out of its ark, touch it lovingly, read from it publicly, and return it, surrounded by song, to its designated place. Spiritually, we pray that our hearts will open to its teachings, we study its words and generations of commentary on its words, and we affirm in community that "its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are paths of peace" (Proverbs 3:17). To many Jews, even the thought of a ripped or damaged Torah scroll is almost physically painful.

In the Tanya, a work of Hasidic philosophy from the early 19th century, Rabbi Shneur Zalman writes that the actual letters of the words with which God created the world are still present inside and animating the elements of creation.



What would this teaching mean about the world outside of the sanctuaries in which we read the Torah? What would it mean if the words with which God created our world – "Let the earth sprout vegetation" (Genesis 1:12) – "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature" (Genesis 1:24) – are still present in every tree on every mountain and every blade of grass in every valley, in every stream that flows into a river and then the ocean? If the natural world around us is God's word in the world, even now, then every hemlock and serviceberry and salmon and person is, in a sense, themselves a page of Torah, a parchment which manifests revelation.

The Tanya's image asks us to imagine that the world outside of our congregations might be just as precious as our most sacred scriptures and rituals, as precious as the Torah scroll that my community kisses as it goes past in our services.

What if, when coal mining companies blow apart mountains with explosives and dump the waste rock in mountain streams, those mystical Hebrew letters of the words with which those mountains and streams were created are being destroyed as well?

What if, when hydraulic fracturing for natural gas is injecting chemicals directly into the groundwater of our neighbors, releasing heat-trapping methane gas, the revelation contained in that rich soil and strong rock were being fractured as well?

What if, when pipelines endanger communities and power plants dirty the air, making people sick, we knew that the divine speech that had created those human beings was itself being harmed and disrespected?

We all know that extracting and burning fossil fuels for electricity is pouring heat-trapping climate pollution into our atmosphere, bringing stronger storms, devastating floods, and food scarcity for folks on the front lines here and around the world. So we have to ask ourselves: What if our use of fossil fueled electricity in the places where we gather to read from the Torah or other sacred teachings is damaging something just as holy as those texts — the people around the world and in the future, all of the plants and animals who depend on a stable climate?

Why are the external deserts in the world still growing? Why is the destruction of our climate continuing apace? We must look, first, to our internal deserts — to the neglected and dry places inside each of us where we have forgotten the full sanctity of ourselves, each other, and our common home. How vast have our internal deserts become that even our sacred communities themselves have participated in idolatries: burning fossil fuels to power our sanctuaries where we pray to the Creator of all, throw things “away” as if our world isn’t finite and as if there are places and people who are disposable, serving food wrought by violence

to people and animals, failing to speak out against the systems that have sacrificed so many Black and brown communities to corporate pollution. We study scriptures and recite liturgies about all that is sacred, but too often our communities have failed to be a real witness in the world that our neighbors of all species are worthy of the greatest protection and care.

For me, there is a lot I’d like to leave behind from these months of pandemic; but one thing I’m bringing forward is a deepened sense of the sacred, of the sacred importance of every single person and of every plant and creature of our natural world.

Inside our sacred communities, all of us, people of faith and spirit, have spaces and rituals in which we have experienced the Holy profoundly, as I do when I lift the fringes of my tallit (prayer shawl) to kiss the Torah scroll as it is paraded past.

But if we are to respond to the external deserts all around us, and ultimately to create a world entirely beyond fossil fuels, we will need to bring that same reverence we have cultivated in our sanctuaries to the world outside of them. We will need our communities to nourish our own certainty that each of us are worthy of great care and protection, and to testify in the world to what is truly sacred.

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Joelle Novey is the director of Earth Ministry’s sibling organization in Maryland, D.C., and Northern Virginia: Interfaith Power & Light (D.C.MDNoVA). She’s active in several Jewish communities in the D.C. area, including Minyan Segulah, and serves on the advisory board of Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action.



Earth Ministry/WA IPL: Looking Forward

By Rev. Laura Baumgartner

This fall, our world is changing again. Some of those changes can sometimes feel out of control. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to change the ways we live and work. The climate has changed now to the point that we are seeing stronger and more frequent fires and storms that put habitats and homes at risk.

Yet, as people of faith, we have a strength and resilience that we draw from that sustains us. Throughout this *Earth Letter*, you will see articles and letters about how people of faith are making a difference in the change that will move us away from our reliance on fossil fuels into a sustainable future. Our work together is making a difference and helping to bring about positive change for the natural world and the earth, our home.

Our organization is also in the midst of transition within this larger season of change. Over the last 16 years, we have had the pleasure to be guided by the able and wise leadership of LeeAnne Beres. However this summer, LeeAnne's time with Earth Ministry drew to a close as she launched her next adventure as the Deputy Director at Washington Nonprofits. We miss her and also we know that we are ready for our next adventure as well.

As the chair of the Board of Directors for Earth Ministry/WA IPL, I am so excited

to have welcomed Nancy Osborn Nicholas as our Interim Executive Director this fall. Nancy's wealth of knowledge and experience from her years of serving as Interim Executive Director at other nonprofit organizations in the state of Washington makes her uniquely qualified to oversee the search for our next permanent Executive Director and to support our staff, board, and community in doing faith-based advocacy, connecting congregations and colleagues around environmental issues, and providing updates and educational opportunities for people of faith in our state about our work together. While we still miss LeeAnne, I am confident that Nancy can move us in the direction we need to go. I am also confident that through this transition, our faith will strengthen us individually and give us courage collectively to speak out in powerful ways and make a difference for the Earth and all the inhabitants with whom we share the Earth.



We are already seeing the seeds of change as a result of the Strategic Plan and our renewed energy behind Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) in our organization that we adopted last year. This fall, we partnered with Congregation Beth Shalom to sponsor the Shmita Year Opening Festival, our first fully multifaith event. At the kick-off, and throughout the year, we will be learning from the witness of the Jewish communities who are part of Earth Ministry/WA IPL about the importance of this year of rest and release in forming us and renewing our connection and protection of the Earth.

We have welcomed several other new staff members and volunteers as well, in addition to Nancy. Through the valuable and important contributions of Keah Callucci, Lindsay Bell, and Sr. Dorothy Verna, we have made important steps toward living out our Strategic Plan and we are confident that we will move even more fully in that direction. I know that our faith will continue to bring us together throughout this season of transition, into something that looks different, but is even more vital and sustainable in the months to come.

I am so thankful to be part of this amazing community and to be able to serve with you.



The Rev. Laura Baumgartner is the Earth Ministry/WA IPL Board Chair and serves as pastor of Haller Lake United Methodist Church.

Pivoting to Our Future

By Nancy Osborn Nicholas

Hello! For those whom I have not met, my name is Nancy Osborn Nicholas and I am so pleased to be working with Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light as the Interim Executive Director.

It is wonderful to be involved with an organization that brings faith-based advocacy on behalf of our communities and Earth home. Working with Earth Ministry/WAIPPL has given me the opportunity to adjust the lens through which I see the world. As I walk around my neighborhood with my dogs, I see with new eyes creation all around me and am filled with deep wonder and appreciation.

My role as Interim Executive Director is to ensure continuity of Earth Ministry/WAIPPL's programs and fundraising while also supporting the search for our next permanent leader. I continue to be impressed by the many ways Earth Ministry/WAIPPL is living into our mission and the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. I have witnessed how individuals and congregations are at the heart of the Earth Ministry/WAIPPL community and am inspired by your commitment to collaboration.

Moving forward, we are thinking creatively with a mindset of abundance about what type of leader can best step into this next phase of our development as a fully multi-faith organization. I have seen and heard a strong dedication to a hiring process that is transparent and leans into our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement and commitments. I am impressed by the thoughtfulness and integrity being brought by the Earth Ministry/WAIPPL community to this process.

As I sit here looking out of my office, it is a beautiful fall day with gorgeous turning leaves, clear skies, and gardens preparing for winter rest. And yet, further south, critical beach and wetland ecosystems are being severely threatened by an oil pipeline breach in Southern California. In a blink of a weekend eye, aquatic and land ecosystems are in danger of being irreparably harmed for generations to come. How will we apply lessons learned in Southern California to our own communities? Will we continue to risk our fragile, uniquely abundant ecosystems to accommodate the unsustainable fossil fuel industry? As I grapple with my own despair, I am buoyed by Earth Ministry/WAIPPL's faith-forward approach to this existential climate crisis. And I find hope in how faithful advocates like you are propelling the just transition to clean energy.

As people of faith, we are called to be stewards of creation. Furthermore, we are called to be in community partnering with people of all faiths and backgrounds on behalf of our common home. I find this call summarized in this quote by singer-author Dar Williams: "The opposite of division is NOT

unity, it is collaboration." This quote also describes Earth Ministry/WAIPPL's work transforming faith into action on behalf of our environment and building a strong, resilient community of advocates dedicated to environmental justice.

Thank you for welcoming me and helping me bridge my own faith with environmental stewardship. It is an honor to work with this organization and be a part of Earth Ministry/WAIPPL's mission.



Nancy Osborn Nicholas is the Interim Executive Director of Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light.



Continued from page 1

dollars to sacrifice their ancestral lands and waters. No price tag can come close to the inherent value of this sacred site; in Coast Salish culture, the land is not an object that can be bought or sold.

On that day, Lummi Nation asserted their sovereignty. The check representing SSA Marine's offer was burned, making a bold public statement of Lummi Nation's stance on the coal export proposal. Though powerful to witness, Lummi leaders should not have had to spend the time and energy on this event. Treaties are supposed to be the supreme law of the land. Yet it would take four more years for their NO to be heard and heeded by the United States government. In 2016 the project was denied by the Army Corps of Engineers, marking the first time a federal agency had denied a Northwest energy project permit on the basis of tribal treaty rights.

After having won their own battle, Lummi Nation continues to serve as a national leader in the effort to protect sacred sites from extractive industries. I encourage you to see page 8 to read about this work directly from the perspective of Lummi leader, Fred Lane.

The Spirit had moved me to skip my college classes (which for me had felt like a BIG deal) to make this journey to stand with Lummi Nation at *Xwe'chi'eXen*. I did not anticipate how I would be moved

and changed by their witness. While at the ceremony, I vividly remember thinking, "I have to get more involved." That day put me on the path to faithful advocacy with Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light. Since then, I have had the great joy of meeting so many other people of faith like you who have stepped into advocacy on fossil fuels through your own pathway filled with meaning.

Over the last decade, the Pacific Northwest saw project after project proposed as industry tried to build out coal export, then oil-by-rail, and now fracked gas pipelines and facilities. Unjustly, the majority of these proposals have threatened Native land, water, and/or treaty-protected resources. All of them were climate-wrecking threats to the future of our shared planet.

In response, a collective voice of opposition arose. We formed broad coalitions bringing together tribal leaders, people of faith, health care professionals, environmentalists, farmers, small business owners, fishermen, youth, and more. People from all walks of life and all corners of the Northwest have stood firm in our opposition to increased buildout of fossil fuel infrastructure.

It hasn't been easy. Sometimes we've joked that this work is a game of whack-a-mole because just as one project was struck down another would arise. Yet, we've remained resilient. We have shown up time and time again at public hearings and rallies. We've told our stories in written comments, testimonies, and letters to the editor. We have brought friends, family, and neighbors into the movement. We have persisted and, thankfully, we have seen the fruits of our labor.

One activist in our community has counted over 40 fossil fuel projects that have been defeated by our people power. The Sightline Institute coined our movement "Thin Green Line" because we have created and held a barricade preventing fossil fuels from moving from the interior of North America to overseas markets. It was a good day when a financial backer of one of the oil proposals was quoted saying, "Everybody outside the Northwest thinks that's where energy projects go to die."

Many of you reading this article may be nodding along. Perhaps you remember the rush of relief and joy that we felt when we heard about the *Xwe'chi'eXen* treaty win, or when the Governor rejected a massive oil shipping terminal in Vancouver, WA, or just this year when Washington's Department of Ecology denied the permit for the methanol plant proposed along the Columbia River in Kalama. These efforts succeeded through Indigenous and grassroots organizing, through everyday people speaking their truth to power, and I'm proud to say that the Earth Ministry/WAIPL community has played a key role in this collective effort.

As people of faith, we bring a unique and powerful constituency to the table that resonates with decisionmakers hearts and connects with shared values. Faith leaders add moral depth to the issue of further investment in fossil fuels. Speaking out from different spiritual traditions, we call out that dependence on finite resources is not good stewardship





Members of the Earth Ministry/WAIPL community at one of the first Cherry Point coal export public hearings

of creation, pollution concentrated in the most vulnerable communities is unjust, and treaty rights are moral obligations that are crucial to uphold.

This is not to say that leaders are not also learners. Earth Ministry/WAIPL initially got involved in protecting *Xwe'chi'exen* after Lummi leaders approached us with the Letter of Apology from Northwest Christian Leaders to Native Nations, which promised better allyship and specifically named protection of sacred sites. We received this call-in seriously and stepped into relationship mindful to follow Lummi leaders' strategy and actions. I have experienced Earth Ministry/WAIPL's commitment to solidarity with Indigenous peoples deepen through these campaigns, and I am grateful for the many ways tribal leaders have invited faith community participation.

The faith community opened our doors wide to community organizing on fossil fuel campaigns over the years. Earth Ministry/WAIPL hosted community forums in sanctuaries, social halls filled for testimony trainings, and parking lots became rally grounds. Perhaps most powerful has been houses of worship hosting the annual Totem Pole Journey – once again, please see Fred Lane's article.

The liturgical calendar has even shown up in our organizing! One year on Ash Wednesday, pastors stood outside of a fracked gas hearing to distribute ashes on the foreheads of those interested. Also, the widely practiced norm of wearing red at hearings started when one was scheduled the week of Pentecost so our organizer suggested we all wear red. I dare say that the Holy Spirit helped that one catch fire!

Finally, our identity as people of faith has provided an important mediating presence. For example, before the wave of fossil fuel project proposals, Earth Ministry/WAIPL played a key role in the decision to phase out Washington's last coal-fired power plant. We worked with a local pastor who held space for the coal plant workers to be in dialogue with environmentalists and helped ensure that no one would get left behind. Now, that coal plant is transitioning to Washington's largest solar farm.

We've witnessed a lot over this last decade, but one thing we haven't seen is a boom in coal, oil, and gas moving through our communities. Just imagine what the Northwest would look like if 30-40 more trains carried these volatile fossil fuels through our state

each day! Your defense has been a game changer.

We're not there yet. Fracked gas continues to be pushed as a green fuel when it's still a major climate polluter. We remain strong in standing against projects like Puget Sound Energy's Tacoma LNG facility threatening the Puyallup Tribe's treaty rights and the Trans Mountain Pipeline being resisted by First Nations in Canada.

There remains much to do to uphold treaty promises and create a just transition off fossil fuels. Yet it is important to pause and reflect on what we have accomplished together over the last decade. With our successes serving as inspiration, we will carry on until the dignity of both God's earth and all its peoples are respected.

I conclude with deep gratitude. Thank you for your faithful advocacy that has brought us all to the point where I could write this piece. Thank you for continuing to engage in a way that centers our faith values of justice and stewardship. Your impact is global and will be felt for generations.

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Sr. Jessica Zimmerle is the Program & Outreach Director of Earth Ministry/WAIPL and a member of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA/ELCIC.

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#FrackedGasIsNotFaithful #NoLNG253



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