



Lummi tribal member, steel artist, and Se'Si'Le Board Member, Cyaltsa April Finkbonner, in prayer at the center of her art piece *All Our Relations*, created for the 2023 All Our Relations Snake River Campaign Journey, United Churches of Olympia, WA. Photo courtesy of Se'Si'Le (photo@Megan Mack).

Sacred Salmon Solidarity: Participating among All Our Relations

By Sarah Robinson, Ph.D. (she/her)

"I am of Creation," JoDe Goudy shared his worldview of profound relationality among living beings connected to healthy and abundant salmon in the NW. Member and former Chairman of Yakama Nation and Vice President of Indigenous non-profit organization Se'Si'Le, Goudy compared being of Creation to "I am a child of God," inviting interfaith reflection for over 110 people at the first stop in the All Our Relations Snake River Campaign.

This tribal-led journey was akin to past totem pole journeys, but this time, the journey's traveling art was made of steel by Cyaltsa April Finkbonner, Lummi tribal member and Board member of Se'Si'Le. To design art for this year's journey, Lummi House of Tears Master Carvers and brothers Jewell and Doug James met with Finkbonner, to visually center salmon among interrelated living beings

dependent on salmon to survive and thrive. In an 8-foot diameter and 5-foot tall steel installation, salmon stand in a circle with representations of prayerful people, bear, bison, eagle, and orca. Finkbonner's interactive art installation helped to communicate the central importance of salmon for NW Indigenous Salmon People, whose relatives sustainably managed salmon across NW watersheds since time immemorial. The 2023 journey encouraged action to protect river health, which supports salmon, which in turn sustain Southern resident orcas. To typify how people can be both blessed and a blessing among

Continued on page 14

Inside this Issue

3 Three Decades Timeline

4 Goings-On

8 With One Voice: A Glimpse through the Decades of Advocacy Letters

10 Interview with Rev. AC Churchill and Rabbi Molly Weisel

13 Circulation Meditation: Our Shared Heartbeat

14 Sacred Salmon Solidarity, *continued*



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Sustaining Contributions

Monthly and quarterly giving provides generously for the work of Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light. Add your sustaining contribution to the growing movement of people of faith and conscience working together for a vision of tomorrow where all have access to clean water, clean air, and the resources they need to thrive!

To donate, visit: earthministry.org or send in the enclosed envelope.

For questions or congregational donations, please contact emoffice@earthministry.org.

Thank you for your generous participation in this work.

Earth Ministry/WA IPL works within the unceded territories of Northwest Native nations. Our office is on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People past and present. Land acknowledgement is one way to resist erasure of Indigenous histories, as well as to honor tribes and the land itself.

FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of the *Earth Letter*!

We are delighted to reconnect with our community to share the hopeful and heartfelt reflections collected here for you. Our theme for this 30th Anniversary *Earth Letter* is *With Our Whole Selves*. Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and



Rev. Laura Baumgartner
Board Chair



Sarah Robinson, Ph.D.
Advocacy Manager

Light is an organization in which our entire lived experience is important to the work we do together. Through trainings, many in our community have learned how our experience and identities motivate us to speak at that moment when we advocate faithfully for justice and respect for the natural world. We say, “as a parent/grandparent” or “as a person of conscience, a person of faith, or a Buddhist/Christian/Confucian/Hindu/Indigenous/Jain/Jewish/Multifaith/Muslim/spiritual/Unitarian Universalist person” or “as a black/white/Hispanic/Latinx/Indigenous/Asian/multiracial/multiethnic resident of WA state.” Each unique identity, each child of God, each life supported within living systems in this dynamic planet, each of us is important in our community story and testimony. When we speak about our faith traditions or our faith identities, we also speak of bringing all of who we are.

Throughout this 30th Anniversary *Earth Letter*, we highlight various ways that—individually and as a community—our whole selves are called to do this work. We hope you’ll enjoy the Goings On section, highlighting affiliated faith communities across the state. Testimonials and articles both look back and point forward to how the whole organization has changed and continues to transform and catalyze faithful advocacy in the state. We invite you to take some time with this 30th Anniversary *Earth Letter* to savor the invitation to your whole self to participate in ways that fit for you. For example, we include a meditation, inviting reflection on the possibility that even our bodies—maybe even especially our bodies—teach us how to show up fully for our common home and our shared goals.

As you consider your place over the past 30 years and in decades yet to come alongside Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light, we hope you’ll stay connected with your whole self. We certainly are grateful for your presence along the way.

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

For 30 years, Earth Ministry/WA IPL has been a national leader in engaging the faith community in environmental stewardship and advocacy.

VISION: Earth Ministry/WA IPL envisions a just and sustainable future in which people of all spiritual traditions fully embrace their faith’s call to environmental stewardship.

MISSION: Earth Ministry/WA IPL 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.

VALUES: Faith-based | Stewardship | Community | Collaboration | Justice

THREE DECADES AT THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH & ENVIRONMENT

pre-1992

Inspiration

Rev. Carla Berkdahl receives motivation for a new beginning when she takes part in cleaning ducks following an oil spill in Puget Sound

1992-1993

New Ministry Start

Rev. Carla Berkdahl and Rev. Jim Mulligan begin Earth Ministry and celebrate its launch.

1993-2003

Leading National Efforts

Carla and Jim grow the organization to include over 1500 individual participants and more than 100 congregational affiliates

2003-2013

Under New Leadership

Rev. Roger Hudson becomes ED in 2004 and Lee Anne Beres begins her term in 2005. WA IPL is launched in 2008.

2013-2023

Multi-Faith Identity

Organization becomes multi-faith in 2019. New Strategic Plan adopted in 2020 with Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) commitments. Rev. AC Churchill welcomed as ED in 2022.

Beyond 2023

Many more years ahead

Let's celebrate 30 years of faithful environmental stewardship in WA state and dream together what can be next.

PAST LOGOS



Joining so many, I celebrate Earth Ministry/WA IPL at the time of this momentous 30th anniversary. Three decades of excellence in leadership, vision, and holy boldness. The work is needed now more than ever; Earth Ministry/WA IPL has what it takes to keep leading.

~ Rev Carla V. Pryne (formerly Berkdahl),
Co-founder and first Executive Director
of Earth Ministry

I am truly grateful that Earth Ministry has so effectively brought the power of the collective voice of the faith community into working partnerships with the broader environmental justice community. We need this now more than ever!

~ Ruth Mulligan, Earth Ministry Co-founder and
Member of St. Mark's Creation Care Ministry

"In their work with Native Nations, Earth Ministry has always been a valued partner. They are both inspired and inspiring in ways that matter most for our common natural heritage."

~ Kurt Russo, Co-Executive Director of Se'Si'Le'

Recent legislation (including IRA & IJJA) can fund energy projects at your congregation. Details: earthministry.org



Toxic Free Future Bill Signing, Olympia
(photo©EM/WA IPL).



Tacoma Mega Warehouse Rally
(photo©EM/WA IPL).



All Our Relations Snake River Campaign Journey,
United Churches of Olympia, WA.
Photo courtesy of Se'Si'Le (photo©Megan Mack).

Season of Creation

By Paul Mitchel (he, him)

I began my professional life as an architect during a time in which architects and engineers were increasingly being called upon to design buildings that are more accessible and more sustainable—both in their construction and in their operational life cycle.

Just about the time I began to transition from my vocation as an architect to my vocation as a pastor, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitros I proclaimed September 1 as the

Orthodox Day of Prayer for Creation. Subsequently, the World Council of Churches (WCC) extended the celebration until October 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. The global interest in a Season of Creation was in its fruitful early stages during my seminary years, and I eagerly awaited the opportunity to incorporate attention to the intrinsic value of Creation into my ministry and preaching. Eventually I became the pastor at Snoqualmie UMC, which had already become a Greening Congregation. My first September there, we started a project as a congregation to remove invasive species and restore habitat at the foot of Little Mount Si. Planning worship focused on Creation coupled with some form of environmental action has been my practice ever since.

I was delighted this year to be included in developing worship resources for congregations to use during this season—or even at other times of year. It was a challenge to me to use the suggested texts from Ezekiel and Romans rather than the old standbys from Genesis, Job, Psalms, and John. I had to stretch to read Ezekiel and Romans through an authentic ecojustice lens while not reading my environmental justice preconceptions into the texts. Additionally, my current context, Walla Walla, is an agricultural community whose economy is directly interwoven with fossil fuels and irrigation. There is resistance to change. Thankfully, respectful and thoughtful conversation has ensued as we struggle together to see and respond to our enmeshed complicity in environmental racism and climate change. I am striving year-round to listen for the prophetic voice to heed God's dream of creation thriving.



Walla Walla Worship Center (photo by author).

March to End Fossil Fuels

By Tom Carlson (he, him)

On Sunday, September 17, just before the September 20 UN Climate Ambition Summit, people from all over the world took to the streets in a massive, coordinated action called the March to End Fossil Fuels in New York City to demand that world leaders commit to phasing out fossil fuels. This was the biggest climate march since 2020.



Seattle First Church members (photo©Jackie Celin).

Members of Seattle First United Methodist Church (First Church) and its Climate Justice Working Group added their voices to the cry for a livable future at the parallel Rally to End Fossil Fuels on the Broad Street Green, just beneath the Space Needle. Wally Shaffer, a retired physician and vice-chair of the First Church council said that the rally was “an inspiration for further climate action.”

Bellingham Multifaith Network for Climate Justice

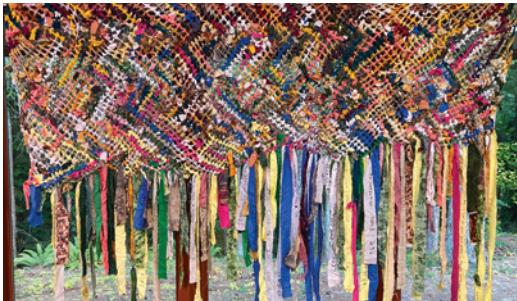
By Kathy Delbecq (she, her) and Diane Sue (she, her)

As Earth Ministry/ WA IPL celebrates their 30th Anniversary, the Multifaith Network for Climate Justice (MNCJ) enthusiastically joins in expressing tremendous gratitude for years of vision and leadership on behalf of earth care and climate justice.

MNCJ began in 2019 when people of faith within Whatcom County united to create a community network focused on creation care and climate justice activities.

Rooted in our spiritual and moral responsibility to protect the Earth, our common home, we engage the faith and wisdom traditions in our area to respond to the many environmental and social impacts of the climate crisis. We understand that both spiritual wisdom and scientific knowledge are integral to informing our responses to the social and environmental impacts of the climate situation. We firmly believe that we **are** stronger when we unify our diverse traditions, and collaborate with impacted communities and civic, social justice, and environmental groups to educate, organize and act.

For the past five years, MNCJ has participated in the City of Bellingham's All in for Climate Action Week. We have offered events



Net of Interconnection, 2022 (photo©Linda Conroy).

that bring forward the voices of wisdom and faith as a moral component of advocacy. In July 2022, we hosted over 500 people for a Sacred Earth Fair on the beautiful property of the Center for Spiritual Living (CSL) in Bellingham. With support from CSL and EM/WA IPL, MNCJ was able to organize an event that included representatives from local governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses, faith/spiritual communities, and music and presentations by local Indigenous artists.

MNCJ also united to create a visual representation of our commitment to climate justice through our Net of Interconnection. Based upon the mythic story of Indra's Net that speaks of interbeing, people throughout the region have been invited to write a personal prayer, intention or commitment regarding earth care and solutions to the climate crisis onto a fabric strip that is woven into this net. Our ongoing expansion of this net has provided a tangible means of acknowledging that we are all connected, and that we are stronger together.

Our partnership with Earth Ministry/WA IPL has led to an official covenant between our two organizations, with MNCJ becoming the first local EM/WA IPL affiliate. We appreciate Earth Ministry's commitment to the moral obligations and responsibilities of Faithful Advocacy and their assistance in providing critical information regarding local, state, and national policy considerations and decisions. We support local climate justice groups in Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham's Climate Action Task force. We closely monitor the faith-based political activism and share critical information that enables members of MNCJ to easily participate in local, state and national campaigns related to climate justice.

MNCJ sends our congratulations to Earth Ministry/WA IPL for all you have accomplished in your thirty years of service. May your important work and visionary leadership continue for decades to come.

Environmental Stewardship at First Congregational Church, Bellevue

By Ron Snell (he, him)

The First Congregational Church, Bellevue has been a member of Earth Ministry for over 10 years. One of the most significant areas of collaboration has been advocacy before the Washington State Legislature on environmental, climate, and environmental justice issues.

On several occasions, Jessie Dye and/ or Jessica Zimmerle, former Advocacy and Outreach staff for Earth Ministry/WA IPL, visited the church to provide training to members of the congregation on faith-rooted advocacy techniques at the legislature, as well as an introduction to environmental issues pending before the legislature. Earth Ministry/WA IPL is also one of the organizers for Environmental Lobby Day. In that role, they briefed participants including FCC Bellevue members on the issues and how to organize advocacy sessions with individual legislators. For many of our members, this was the first time they participated in discussions with individual legislators. At the last Environmental Lobby Day before the pandemic, FCC Bellevue had ten participants, the most for any church that year. This was a testament to the effective work of Earth Ministry/WA IPL staff.

The church's advocacy has not been limited to participation in Environmental Lobby Day. Earth Ministry staff also trained members on the importance of contacting decision-makers through emails, phone calls to the legislative offices, and using the Legislative Hotline during key stages in the legislative process. This education and experience has supported the church's Environmental Stewardship group in developing a list of issues for church members to track and advocate for beyond those supported at Environmental Lobby Day.

Over the years, the relationship between the church and Earth Ministry/WA IPL has been a fruitful one and a blessing to our church's efforts at helping protect God's Creation and serving our region's most vulnerable.

30th Anniversary Events

By Rev. Laura Baumgartner (she/her)



Return and Restore, Lake Sammamish State Park, October 8, 2023
(photos © EM/WA IPL).



Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light hosted two events this year in celebration of our 30th anniversary. On April 30, we gathered at St. Mark's Cathedral for a fun afternoon of fellowship, a virtual and in person silent auction, followed by events for the auction winners with various members of the board and staff.

Then on October 8, we gathered again, this time at Lake Sammamish State Park. The afternoon included a cookie and cheesecake buffet, a nature walk, and plenty of time with outdoor games and falling leaves, as well as the first Community Awards.

For thirty years, Earth Ministry has responded to complex problems with practical hope. This community gives divided groups ways to come together, despairing people reasons to feel joy, and troubled ecosystems paths to flourishing. Here's to the next 30 years!

~ Kevin O'Brien, Professor of Religion,
Pacific Lutheran University

The Community Awards were given to these congregations and faithful communities:

A commitment to intersectional environmental learning, healing, and reconciliation:

Holden Village

A commitment to embracing renewable energy:

Keystone United Church of Christ (UCC)

A commitment to meaningful and intentional gardening and/or meal sharing:

Temple B'nai Torah

A commitment to being, or working towards, a net zero goal:

Peace Lutheran Church

A commitment to helping green the community beyond congregational boundaries:

University Congregational UCC

A commitment to greening your congregation through the work of green team projects:

St. John United Lutheran Church

A commitment to thinking big and creatively, sometimes in unexpected ways, with greening projects:

Congregation Beth Shalom

Congratulations to all the recipients! Earth Ministry/WA IPL is honored to call all of you community and looks forward to many more years of award-winning work and play together.

Holy Cross Lutheran, Bellevue, WA becomes a nurse log for a thriving community garden and low-cost housing

By Janet Farness (she, her)

In 2009, Holy Cross became involved in a strategic planning process. Having formed in an area of Bellevue that housed many aerospace engineers and their families in the 70's and 80's, its heyday of growth seemed to be behind us. How could we rejuvenate our mission with our current membership? The congregation had a heart and assets for both the work of housing AND preserving open space on our three acres of orchard and open space near Factoria. The area, still reeling from the effects of the Great Recession, caused us to realize we had open grassy space that could become a food growing garden. We also realized we could rehabilitate our orchard and it could provide boxes and boxes of healthy apples, plums and quince to local hungry people.

We reached out to the community to help and we met many amazing people who would tend Mason bees to help pollinate gardens and orchards. Volunteers came forth who would provide expertise to our learning vegetable gardeners and even fruit tree experts approached us—Seattle Tree Fruit Society and City Fruit. The city of Bellevue connected us to volunteers! Holy Cross Orchard Gardens was born. Simultaneously we connected with multi-faith Earth Ministry/WA IPL who provided guidelines (Greening Congregations Handbook) about how to turn our emerging sense of God's creation and the need for stewardship into a regular part of the DNA of Holy Cross. Our Earthkeeping team was born.

On Oct. 1 2023, Holy Cross Lutheran celebrated the legacy of our church over its 62 years and officially closed its congregation to make way for the continuing work of Creation stewardship and food justice through Orchard Gardens and thoughtful housing by Habitat for Humanity. Orchard Gardens donates more than a ton of fresh healthy produce each year to hungry people in the Bellevue area.



Holy Cross Orchard Gardens (photo by author).

For over 10 years, I have been blessed to be able to collaborate with Earth Ministry/WA IPL, enhancing the ecological work of the faith communities where I have ministered. Through Greening Congregations, legislative advocacy, the 50th anniversary celebration of Earth Day, and now as a board member, I continue to learn how people of faith can more ardently care for the Earth, our common Home. Thank you, Earth Ministry/WA IPL!

~ Patrick Barredo, Director of Social Outreach and Advocacy, St. James Cathedral, Seattle

Faith Action Network gives thanks for our partnership with you for environmental justice across the state and in Olympia. Your focus, expertise, and faithfulness inspire us as collaborators and friends who care about earth community. With gratitude,

~ Elise DeGooyer, Executive Director, Faith Action Network

It has been a joy to work with the staff and volunteers at Earth Ministry over the last 10 years. The level of encouragement offered by staff meant not just shared effort but also shared celebration when taking action to stop destructive fossil fuel projects, and build stronger, cleaner communities.

~ Rev. Richenda Fairhurst, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Climate Justice Committee and Oregon Interfaith Power and Light; United Methodist Creation Justice Movement Cafe

Earth Ministry/WA IPL is an essential partner and advocate in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. Their powerful program work inspires, engages, connects and calls on people of faith and all citizens to deepen our relationships with each other and to honor the lands and waters upon which we all depend.

~ Joseph Bogaard, Executive Director, Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition

With One Voice

By Rev. Laura Baumgartner (she, her)

1995 Ecumenical Statement on Earth Day

EARTH LETTER

A STATEMENT BY NORTHWEST BISHOPS & COMMUNION EXECUTIVES TO PARISHES & LOCAL CONGREGATIONS ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF EARTH DAY: APRIL 22, 1995

The Earth is the Lord's

We live in a magnificent part of God's creation. Washington State is blessed with diverse communities of people; with refreshing rains and dry deserts; with mountains and plains; with ocean coasts and inland lakes; with bountiful plant and wildlife. For all these things, we are grateful to God.

I. We find strength in the stream of Biblical affirmations that tell us, powerfully, that the earth is the Lord's (Ps. 24). God has given the earth to the whole human family "to till it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). God has given us responsibility for dominion over the earth. We believe that the creation is good and that we are entrusted with giving it creative care and enabling the whole natural order to achieve its proper end. Dominion in the sense of domination is not consistent with the Biblical role for humankind in the creation.

II. We believe that God calls us to exercise stewardship with justice; to maintain the integrity of creation; to use, share justly and replenish the earth's resources; to conserve the earth's eco-system; and to sustain the lives of all. We are called to develop a rich Biblical spirituality that inspires, strengthens and sustains the struggle of people to live fully in a restored environment.

III. We have seen concrete examples of the violation of creation that threaten the foundations of all life. These violations separate us from the love of God. The earth is not ours to use for narrow and selfish purposes. Land is not given to us to use solely as a commodity. The earth is not ours to abuse, not even in the name of national security, progress, and economic gain.

We do not have to choose between the health, replenishment and preservation of our environment and the health and well being of people. In many instances, the abuse of creation and the reign of injustice against rural people and communities of color reinforce each other. By using the gift of the earth in a responsible way for sustenance, development and livelihood, we can sustain communities of justice.

IV. We lift up our need for repentance as we contemplate the meaning of the prayer, "Your will be done"—for we all, as individuals and as churches, share in the abuse of God's creation. We commit ourselves and urge our churches to enter into the concrete challenge of responsible participation with creation.

We encourage the churches:

to undertake personal actions and life-style changes which transform the way we view the environment; and which honor and preserve this gift of God; to identify ways in which we violate the creation of God;

to respect, restore and develop cultural values which preserve and enhance, rather than misuse our resources;

to denounce and unmask all elements of our environmental practices that perpetuate or produce discrimination against marginalized communities;

to help shape public policy that protects our environment and promotes economic justice.

Signed

Africa Methodist Episcopal Church
The Rev. Dr. Ellis Casson, Ecumenical
Officer

African Methodist Episcopal Zion
Church The Rev. L.J. Thompson,
Presiding Minister

American Baptist Churches of the
Northwest, The Rev. Paul Alta,
Regional Minister

Northwest Region Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ) The Rev. Robert
Clarke Brock, Regional Minister

Church of the Brethren, Oregon-
Washington District, The Rev. Jan Eller,
Executive

Episcopal Church The Right Rev. F.
Jeffrey Terry, Bishop, Diocese of
Spokane and The Rt. Rev. Vincent W.
Warner, Jr., Bishop, Diocese of Olympia

Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America The Rev. Paul Bartling,
Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod;
The Rev. Robert Keller, Bishop, Eastern
Washington/Idaho Synod; and The Rev.
David Wold, Bishop, Southwestern
Washington Synod

Presbyterian Church (USA), Synod of
Alaska Northwest, The Rev. David C.
Moeckhof, Synod Executive

Roman Catholic Church
The Most Rev. Thomas J. Murphy,
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Seattle and
The Most Rev. Francis E. George,
Bishop, Diocese of Yakima and The
Most Rev. William S. Skyles, Bishop,
Diocese of Spokane

United Methodist Church, Pacific
Northwest Conference The Rev. Calvin
D. McConnell, Bishop

United Church of Christ, Washington
N. Idaho Conference The Rev. Lynne
S. Fitch, Conference Minister

Washington Association of Churches
The Rev. John Boonstra, Executive
Minister

Local Ecumenical Councils
The Rev. David C. Alger, Executive
Director, Associated Ministries of
Tacoma/Pierce County

The Rev. Elaine J.W. Starovsky,
President Director, Church Council of
Greater Seattle

2005 Sign-on Letter

Action Alert

Help bring cleaner cars to Washington state.
Please share this Action Alert with
you congregational leaders.

Earth Ministry, Climate Solutions, and the Washington Association of Churches are currently circulating a congregational leaders' "sign-on letter" to state legislators titled, "Human and environmental health are moral issues: Support Clean Car legislation."

The letter reads:

As religious leaders we are led to play a major role in raising awareness about the inextricable link between human health and environmental health. It is our responsibility to introduce the moral and ethical reasons for reducing toxic, air emissions. Right now we have the opportunity to reduce these toxic emissions from our motor vehicles by supporting stronger vehicle emission standards that have already been passed in California and seven other states. ...Because of health benefits and the significant consumer, environmental, and economic benefits of cleaner cars -- as well as the moral imperative to take care of all Creation (human and non-human) -- we urge the Legislature to adopt the new Clean Car standards in Washington.

This legislation already has much support and stands a good chance of passing if we continue to build support for it. Please consider asking your congregational leaders to sign this letter, as soon as possible. If leaders do decide to sign on, please call or email Tanya using the contact information below.

To read the letter and for more information, please go to www.cleancarswashington.org. Thank you for your consideration!

WA 98117 • (206) 632-2426 • tmbarnett@earthministry.org

When I look back on Earth Ministry/WA IPL's long history, I see an organization that is a powerful and effective force for environmental justice thanks to the dedication and hard work of a fantastic community of people who are passionate about putting faith into action. We've achieved so much together—some of my most memorable of our shared advocacy victories are stopping dozens of coal export/oil by rail facilities, passing 100% clean electricity and climate justice bills, banning toxic chemicals in baby bottles, and so much more. We can be proud of all that we've collectively accomplished as we look forward to EM/WA IPL's next 30 years!

~ LeeAnne Beres, former Executive Director (2005-2021)

A review of the archives of Earth Ministry/ Washington Interfaith Power and Light revealed how faithful advocacy has shifted and deepened in 30 years of speaking out and speaking up.

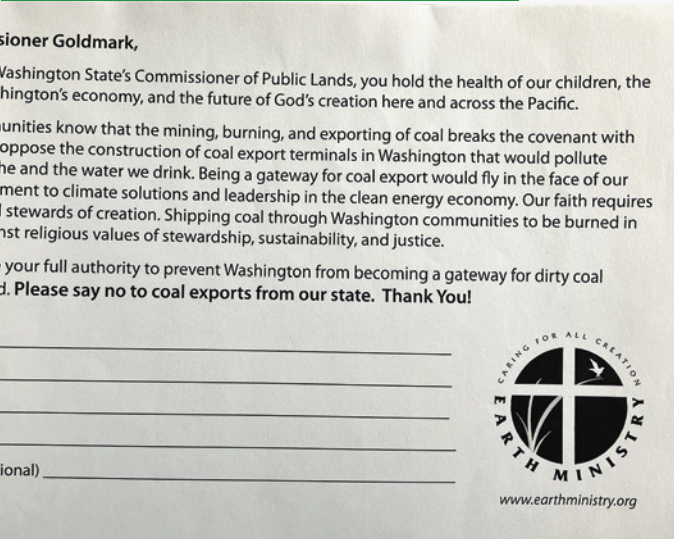
In the first letter from 1995 [pictured left], on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Earth Day, this letter brought faith leaders together to speak to the importance of the celebration and call people of faith to responsibly protect and replenish regional resources.

A decade later, in 2005, we see faith leaders beginning to take a stronger stand with regards to a legislative priority and advocate for a specific change: the Clean Car Standard, making a moral case for decreasing carbon dioxide emissions.

By 2011, the advocacy postcard opposing the construction of new coal export terminals extends the advocacy role beyond faith leaders to all people of faith, inviting participation from many more people within and beyond traditional congregations and denominations.

A Glimpse through the Decades of Advocacy Letters

2011 Say No to Coal Exports Postcard



In 2014, a tribal support letter updated previous support and solidarity with Native peoples throughout the state of Washington and aligned this faithful voice with the voices of those who have been stewarding and calling for the preservation of Indigenous lands since time immemorial.

Closing out the collection of letter opportunities, we see advocates against GTN XPress pipeline's proposed expansion called to respond electronically. From 2022-23, many community advocates, including Senator Maria Cantwell, said no to pushing more fracked gas across the West Coast. We worked in solidarity with partners from several tribes, over a dozen NGOs, and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)/ Oregon Interfaith Power and Light and that effort continues.

As we live more fully into our commitment to center the experience of those who experience the most impact from environmental crises and also to work with allies across borders of faith communities, race, socio-economic condition, as well as many others, we find that our collective voices within and beyond the faith community for justice and healing for the earth are stronger than ever!

Consider attending or hosting a local screening of the new Nez Perce film, "**Covenant of the Salmon People.**" More info: <https://covenantofthesalmonpeople.com/where-to-watch>

For more information and action opportunities, please see our website: earthministry.org

2014 Denominational Tribal Support Letter

A Public Declaration to the Tribal Councils and Traditional Spiritual Leaders of the Native Peoples of the Northwest

August 2014; updated December 2015
 c/o Jewell Praying Wolf James, Lummi

In 1987 and again in 1997, bishops and denominational executives of churches in the Northwest offered letters of apology to the indigenous peoples of our region. These letters acknowledged the historical disrespect of traditional Native American spiritual practices and traditions. In those letters, the leaders of our denominations promised "to honor and defend the rights of Native Peoples ... [including] access and protection of sacred sites ... [and to] end political and economic injustice against tribal communities."

In this decade a new threat has arisen against Native Peoples: the mining, transport, burning, and disposal of fossil fuels. Proposed coal export terminals would damage native fisheries protected by long-standing treaties and poison our shared air and water. Coal trains servicing these terminals would cut across lands sacred to indigenous peoples, and impact the health of those communities. In this generation we also acknowledge that the mining and burning of fossil fuels creates the terrible threats of climate disruption, ocean acidification, and pollution to the harm of all God's children, especially the poorest.

Tribal leaders have asked us to keep our past promises, and to stand with them in defense of their sacred lands and fishing rights. And so we call upon the Northwest Congressional delegation and other elected officials, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and all people of goodwill to uphold the treaty rights of Native communities of the Northwest. We ask that all environmental and cultural harm to Native lands and peoples be considered in making public policy decisions about the mining, transport, and export of coal and other fossil fuels.

As religious leaders we call for the protection of the life we have been given and the Earth we all call home. Our greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). Putting this ethic into action, we stand in solidarity with our Native neighbors to safeguard the traditional lands, waters, and sacred sites of their peoples from destruction.

Most Rev. Thomas Daly
 Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Spokane

Rev. Michael Denton
 Conference Minister, Pacific Northwest Conference,
 United Church of Christ

Judith Desmarais, SP, and Leadership Team
 Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province

Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo
 Auxiliary Bishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle

Rev. Grant Hagiya
 Bishop, Pacific Northwest & Alaska Conferences
 of the United Methodist Church

The Rev. Richard E. Jaech
 Bishop, Southwestern Washington Synod,
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Samuel Merrill
 Clerk, Friends Committee on Washington Public Policy

Rev. Sandy Messick
 Regional Minister and President, Northwest Regional
 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Marcia J. Patton
 Executive Minister, Evergreen Association
 of American Baptist Churches

The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel
 Bishop, The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
 Archbishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle

Most Rev. Joseph Tyson
 Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Yakima

The Rev. Brian Kirby Unti
 Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod,
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rt. Rev. James E. Waggoner, Jr.
 Bishop, The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

The Rev. Martin Wells
 Bishop, Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod,
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2022-23 Stop GTN XPress Pipeline Expansion



Interview with Rev. AC Churchill and Rabbi Molly Weisel



Rev. AC Churchill



Rabbi Molly Weisel

Rabbi MW (she, her): What brought you to work at the intersection of earth care and religious conscience?

Rev. AC (they, them): It's been a journey for me: a journey that started with wanting to be part of movements that bridge divides. I especially wanted to focus on divisions between the church, because at that time I was in a Christian context, and communities the church had harmed. In seminary, I spent a majority of my time focused on the harm caused to LGBTQIA+ communities. After graduation and ordination, that focus expanded to include racial justice and learning about anti-Blackness and the insidiousness of white supremacy. The more I have learned about divisions, the more I have been able to understand the intersections of justice movements. It has only been recently that I have understood more fully the connection between environmental degradation and all of the other issues that are so important to me.

Through it all, I always wanted to focus on how we go about working towards justice and healing. What I've come to realize is that there are systems—whether they be queer oppression or racism or Islamophobia or anti-Semitism or environmental degradation—that are all rooted within the same thing. They are all rooted within what, in my tradition, would call the sin of consumption and the idolatry of hierarchy. Those systems say certain people are worth more, and the earth is ours to take.

Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light and faithful environmental advocates across the Northwest, have helped me to realize more fully how the systems I was working to change are all impacted by the environment and often experience environmental harms and degradation at higher levels. This has been and will continue to be a blessing as I continue to learn how to be part of movements that bridge divides.

Rabbi MW: Interesting. It seems like at the root of it for you, it is all about dignity for all people and all things. I'm curious what it means to you to use a term like a "person of faith and conscience" or "people of faith and conscience" to describe Earth Ministry/WA IPL and the community. I think historically some people have seen religion as the body that's doing harm to communities of color, indigenous communities or the earth or any of the number of the things that you talked about LGBTQIA+ communities, so [I'm] curious what it means for you to be a person of faith, and then also what it means

for you to be a leader of this community that is a faith community and a conscience[-led] community.

Rev. AC: It's important to specifically include the language of "people of faith and conscience" because we want our work to be expansive enough to include those who hear a moral call to care for the environment whether or not those values and those morals come from a sacred tradition or from a connection to the universe or the wind or the sky, sacred teachings outside of a religious tradition.

I think we [at EM/WA IPL] inhabit a really important space in this work because as people, many of whom do come from organized traditions, we know that our organized communities have participated in harm to the environment and to other communities. As an organization whose vision is working towards a just and sustainable future, I think it's critical that we name the harm that we've caused. It's critical that we commit towards changing our behavior, towards re-covenanting about what it means to be in relationship. We are continually learning and growing. We don't have to stay in those places. We don't have to continue the practices of degradation. We don't have to continue using fossil fuels and energy resources that harm the earth. We can change how we are, so that we can be better in relationship with Creation, with our neighbors, each other, and ourselves. We can be in relationship with the earth in positive ways, not just in less harmful ways.

Rabbi MW: Thank you. What do you bring to this moment in terms of social, environmental, and prophetic justice building?

Rev. AC: I bring a deep sense of the importance of relationships and a set of skills focused on relationality. I believe, the way we build relationships, work within movements and on campaigns will reflect what type of world we'll be building.

I often describe it like this: When you talk about traditional faith-based organizing, it's very much rooted in secular organizing, which is very campaign heavy, very win-lose. In some situations of faith-based organizing, the ends justify the means when we are focused on a particular campaign and winning on an issue. Yet, for me, because I've had connections, teachers, and mentors who have helped me understand and help me grow in a different sense of a faith, instead of a faith-based, I prefer a faith-rooted approach. It's similar in the sense that you use some of the same campaign organizing tactics and skills, but it's different because in faith-rooted organizing, the means are the end. How you treat people in the midst of a campaign and who you're willing to sacrifice along the way for that win, that's the type of world you're going to create. So for me, when we talk about justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, they're more than just buzzwords. They really are a way to live, which means the work is often uncomfortable and messy. I think I bring not only the sense that we have to do this work in relationship with one another, but also that the discomfort and the messiness are part of the work. I'm comfortable being in the relational messy. I think another skill I bring is a pastoral sense because my relationality is so important. In the midst of the discomfort and the messiness, I'm always trying to remember I'm not willing to sacrifice somebody along the way. I'm not willing to say "You don't understand, you don't get it, and we're going to move on from you." I'm much more interested in taking the time to build up relationships. I know in our work of environmental care, stewardship, and justice, it often doesn't feel like we have time to do this work. Yet, often what this work needs is time.

Rabbi MW: It's more "Moses-prophetic-and-long-term" and less "Ezekiel-fire-and-brimstone".

Rev. AC: For sure. I mean, I definitely have those moments where I want to be like, "Bring it down," and I definitely

In the midst of the discomfort and the messiness, I'm always trying to remember I'm not willing to sacrifice somebody along the way.

~ Rev. AC Churchill

get passionate. I'm not afraid of strong statements or stances, and I think there are ways that we can do that, while building relationships. I think it's critical to have those relationships in the beginning, so when you do make those strong stances, you can come back and say to partners or people who may not understand, "I hear you. It is hard for you to understand why we made this statement or why this is important. These are the reasons. We have to do this work. If you're uncomfortable in this work, how can we journey beside you? What do you need, so we can journey toward whatever healing looks like." I used to think that justice was the goal. We just need justice. It's shifted, and now I think more about healing, transformation, and wholeness as the goal for me now. Justice is a mechanism; it's one of the mechanisms to get there.

Rabbi MW: This might be related to what you just were talking about. What role does this organization play in regional and statewide issues of concern? It seems like the relationship-building is key.

Rev. AC: We, as an organization, are able to bring together a myriad of voices and perspectives to work towards common goals. Oftentimes in coalition spaces, we are the only faith-rooted group or the only multi-faith group, and so we often bring messages of morals, values, and heart messages, which is not the focus of other organizations. Partner organizations are focused on the science, the data, and on the logistics, which is why I think it's important for us to be in relationships with those other coalitions. What we have is a voice that says, "We have all of this amazing research and data to show why these changes need to happen or what we could do. We know how to talk to people's hearts and minds. Let's weave our voices together." So we are able to be present in the space of the heart and the mind, with the data to help connect the realities of what's going on with people's lives with their values.

Also, because we are grounded in faith, we are able to go into spaces where a lot of environmental organizations struggle to be. We're able to say this is not just an environmental issue. This is a faith issue. This is a moral issue. Our work gives an opportunity for communities to learn more about environmental issues and what's impacting their families. It also gives opportunities for the coalitions to see the richness of humanity and begin to break down assumptions about who is "other".

We find that folks across Washington have shared values, especially when it comes to a deep appreciation and love for the land. While we do not always agree on land usage, sustainability practices, or solutions for the climate crises, we [at EM/WA IPL] believe there are opportunities to work together, especially when we do not vilify one side or another. Take farming for example, Eastern and Central Washingtonians love the land, and there have

NOURISHING RELATIONSHIPS

been systems that have been put in place that make climate-friendly agriculture more difficult than putting in solar on your house of worship. Our goal at EM/WA IPL is to build grassroots communities that challenge the systems that seek to divide us, even the divides that are present between Western, Central, and Eastern Washingtonians.

Rabbi MW: Alright, switching gears. What nourishes you or energizes you to do this work?

Rev. AC: I see the possibility of a world where we could have access to clean air, clean water, and where your zip code doesn't affect your life expectancy. I see the possibility of a world where human involvement in the environment isn't always seen as a pejorative, and our connection to the natural world is a benefit. We're not just extracting. That vision is what energizes me and nourishes me for this work.

Also, knowing I'm in a community with people who are just as passionate, who want to be able to go outside and breathe freely or who want to be able to watch their neighborhood kids play without worrying about noise pollution or trucks zooming down their road because industrial building projects take precedence over their health.

A couple other things, I'm renewed by being surrounded by people who see the beauty in the world and I love to laugh. Finding the joy in things and having people who could help me get out of my own head to see the joy. Laughing makes my spirit light.

Rabbi MW: Awesome. So Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light has changed a lot over the years. How do you see the future of the organization, for example, from now to 2050?

Rev. AC: So we want to create as many access points to environmental justice as possible, which means developing organizational resources throughout the state. Community organizing is done most effectively by people who live, work, play, and pray in that specific geographic area. I see us having an expanded staff, board, and volunteer network that is able to mobilize around more environmental issues that are impacting communities around Washington. This would include expanding our advocacy priorities to include specific concerns like food, farming, agriculture, and forests. All of these areas connect with work we are currently doing and yet the vision would be to have the organizational capacity needed for sustainability and broad impact.

Additionally, I want to strengthen resources for faith communities. Already we are planning to add programs and trainings for faith communities in 2024 around issues that congregations and communities have identified are important. In 2024 and beyond, the expanded faith resources will also be for faith communities who may not see advocacy as an interest or option. Advocacy is an important tool for change, and it sits alongside other tools like direct action (e.g. community gardens and community solar), education, spiritual reflection, and building community (i.e. addressing the feelings of

isolation or compassion fatigue).

Lastly, as an organization, I see us continuing to stay very firmly in the environmental justice lane, but recognizing that lane is connected to the rest of the road as well.

Rabbi MW: Totally. Okay, a quick midrash [ancient rabbinic commentary] for you. One of the stories the rabbis tell about the crossing of the Red Sea is that when the sea parted, it didn't just open into one path, but that there were all these different paths. As people were walking down their path, they could see other people on other paths through the water. Everyone has their own path towards redemption.

Rev. AC: I love that.

Rabbi MW: I have just one more question. What else would you like the Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light community to know?

Rev. AC: My hopes for the future of the organization are that I really want us to remember that we are both working to stop the environmental harms, and we are working to build that vision of a just and sustainable future for all.

Rabbi MW: I'm into that.

Rev. AC: I think that includes thinking more about resiliency centers and how resilience works because climate change is not coming; it's here. So now we have to begin to adapt. And so how do we? I'm thinking of a vision where everyone thrives.

Rabbi MW: And we're back to relationship, where we started. I want to thank you for taking this time to talk with me and for sharing your perspectives with *Earth Letter* readers. I've really enjoyed the time.

Rev. AC: Thanks, Rabbi Molly. I've enjoyed the time together as well and am grateful for the opportunity to do this work with you and so many others!

This interview took place on October 6, 2023.

Circulation Meditation: Our Shared Heartbeat

By Sarah Robinson (she, her)

As you sit or lie down, notice the gentle tug of gravity and the places where your body meets it. You can settle in here on this earth, your home, and invite your breath to soften. Your body knows how to breathe without having to direct it or to think about it at all. This knowledge is part of your inheritance from ancient, breathing ancestors that emerged from the waters. We connect with all breathing beings through this very simple, yet miraculous moment of breath.

Every being alive today inhabits this moment of aliveness with our breaths as mutual offerings of life-giving elements. All in our animal community take in-breaths made of plant respirations, like exhalations of precious oxygen. Through the wisdom of our bodies, human in-breaths transform into carbon dioxide out-breaths, without which plants would not thrive. These interrelations have shaped the contours of our world. What an amazing moment-to-moment gift-giving we inhabit, and what a gift to bring our awareness to it. Our breath brings oxygen into our internal worlds, circulating with each heartbeat. Again, without effort, our bodies' wisdom offers a rhythm we feel when we pay attention to our hearts.

As you breathe, take a moment to notice your heart, beating a subtle background music in each moment of each day. The trees, too, have a rhythm that moves nourishing liquids from roots to treetops and back again. Some compare this parallel pulse to our heart rhythms, which ebb and flow in tandem with those that came before us, tree grandparents and human grandparents alike. It is the same with the squirrels that jump from branch to branch, the ferns in feathered quiet, the earthbound roots of the tallest trees, and the meandering people who look up to see the sky. All share in this living rhythm, flowing freely through our bodies, each of us unique in all of time, yet sharing so much in common, sharing circulation, sharing breath, sharing inherited blessings and wisdom in the flow of life itself, circulating within each of us and among us.

What a miraculous gift to be alive. What an amazing gift to breathe. What a tender gift to have a heart that beats and lungs that know how to nourish us. What a gift to be connected to each other through the breath, connected also to the rhythm of life in all living beings. What wisdom is rooted in the body of each tender-hearted, breathing being through whom life itself flows, who share this precious planet. Blessings to you, precious one.

In this season of generosity and gratitude and at this time when beloved community is so needed, we dedicate a prayer to the healing and restoration of our communities, local to global. May all who hunger be fed. May all who suffer find healing. In the many names by which we know the sacred. Blessings and peace to each and all.

Author's Note: Sarah Robinson began working and meditating in the year 2000 with the Community of Mindful Living, affiliated with Zen Monk-Poet-Peacemaker Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022). Thich Nhat Hanh reflects on interbeing, or interconnectedness of all life, with such respect that he named his religious order the Order of Interbeing. This meditation was inspired by the traditional Zen practice of Touching the Earth. May it be an inspiration for your own reflection and meditation.



Return and Restore, Lake Sammamish State Park. (photo©Sarah Robinson).

Earth Ministry is a beacon of light as one of the earliest leaders promoting religion and ecology on the ground. Your steadfast work with so many constituencies is a sterling example across the country. May your work continue to flourish in the decades ahead!

~ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Sacred Salmon Solidarity

Continued from page 1

All Our Relations, the artwork featured an interactive smudge bowl, lifted out at each journey stop where participants were invited forward for a smudge blessing.

In late September and early October 2023, the All Our Relations journey followed a 10-day path across WA, ID, and OR. Hosted by United Churches of Olympia on September 23rd, the first event offered meaningful opportunities to understand salmon, rivers, and interconnected Indigenous relations of meaning, alongside faith-rooted and non-profit organization speakers in solidarity with Native Nations. With collaboration between EM/WA IPL, Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center (IPJC), Khimstonik, Native Organizers Alliance (NOA), Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment, Save Our Wild Salmon (SOS), and Sierra Club, and led by Indigenous non-profit Se'Si'Le, the 2023 journey events cultivated respect for regional Indigenous people's relational understanding of salmon protection.

"Dams represent the extinction of native people," said Goudy, highlighting the interrupted flow of salmon rivers and losses for tribal communities self-identified

as Salmon People. Each journey event focused attention on heartbreaking salmon losses, associated with the inability to return to their places of origin and spawning due to dams. In summer 2023, a regular "Hot Water Report" described high temperatures in reservoirs near the Lower Snake River (LSR) dams, which rendered these waters destructive to migrating fish. Despite major investments in fish ladders and other interventions to assist fish migration through the dams, several Snake River salmon species are endangered and on the brink of extinction. Cumulatively, the costs of damming certain rivers appear to be higher than the benefits, particularly considering what salmon mean for Indigenous people. Goudy offered heartfelt, guiding words, "I came here to live my life the best that I can," encouraging a return to "right and respectful relations" between people and salmon, as well as honoring treaty-protected fishing rights.

Proponents of keeping LSR dams highlight needed services, such as hydroelectricity, irrigation, and transportation for agricultural goods, but dam removal proponents say these river services can be replaced more easily than fish species on the verge of extinction. In discussing environmental concerns, some assert a false opposition between green energy and Indigenous treaty protections for heritage lifeways. The 2023 All Our Relations events represented alignment among Indigenous, religious, and ecological interests, as well as gracious offerings of shared meaning.

Despite a decidedly rainy day in Olympia, the space was warmly colored by stained glass windows in United Churches of Olympia, the entry was framed by stunning totem poles from House of Tears Carvers. The gathering focused meaningfully with music from Dog Butte Round Drum, and over 100 people attended the program, featuring NW Indigenous, religious, and non-profit speakers. Earth Ministry/WA IPL Executive Director Rev. AC Churchill offered welcome, Save Our Wild Salmon (SOS) Executive Director Joseph Bogaard gave an overview of the situation of Snake River salmon on the brink of extinction, and Yakama member JoDe Goudy offered remarks, inviting participants to look at the situation through his



"Inside each of us is a song, a prayer, a sound," said Jewell James, Master Carver of House of Tears Carvers from the Lummi Nation, Olympia, WA. Photo courtesy of Se'Si'Le (photo©Megan Mack).



Lummi elder and Totem Pole Master Carver Doug James carrying steel salmon, created by Cyaltsa April Finkbonner. Photo courtesy of Se'Si'Le (photo©Megan Mack).



Closing prayers with former Yakama Tribe Chairman JoDe Goudy, Rev. AC Churchill, and Seattle Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, United Churches of Olympia, WA. Photo courtesy of Se'Si'Le (photo©Megan Mack).

Indigenous lens. Most Rev. Eusebio L. Elizondo, M.Sp.S., Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle, spoke briefly and humbly about regional Catholic support for the wellbeing and dignity of local tribal communities dependent on salmon not only for sustenance, but for cultural continuity amid ongoing struggles with colonial incursion on land, culture, and health. Senior Programs Manager for the Laudato Si Movement in North America Anna Johnson connected NW rivers to environmental work of Pope Francis, and Sierra Club's Matt Dollinger encouraged everyone to take action to protect Snake River salmon. Finkbonner spoke about her art, representing myriad living beings dependent on NW salmon. To the sound of the round drum, a line of participants snaked forward for a smudging ceremony by the steel art piece, followed by perspective from the James brothers, Goudy, and shared prayers with Goudy, Rev. AC Churchill, and Bishop Elizondo.

Among WA Bishops, Elizondo signed a 2022 statement entitled, "Caring for Creation and the Common Good in the Lower Snake River Region." This statement encourages spiritual reflection and action in solidarity with Indigenous fishing rights:

A comprehensive plan developed with the input of affected communities is needed to address the health of the Lower Snake River and the decline of species in the region. In taking action to care for God's creation, we urge policy makers to respect the dignity of every human person and serve the common good, two important pillars of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

In alignment with the pivotal statement by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015), Johnson related salmon recovery with the Season of Creation to "remember and re-embody" ourselves as "part of Creation." Johnson referred to

13th century monk St. Francis' Canticum of the Creatures, "singing of the deep and abundant beauty" of our "Sister-Mother Earth." Bishop Elizondo spoke of the Earth and Universe as sacred text—the Book of Nature—to contemplate a shared Creator.

Master Carver from House of Tears Carvers and Lummi tribal member, Jewell James offered prayerful understanding of human interrelationship among beings, encouraging religious leaders in the room to begin talks with, "God created all things." In relations among living beings, he explained, to center the Creator helps locate people in awe and appreciation with fellow beings, whose lives we can support and on whose lives we depend. James' voice rose to fill the church, as he said, "All the rivers that are dying, the rivers have spirit... they have power, spirit, and song. It's not natural resources." With his eyes focusing grief towards action, James said, "Lummi River is dead. Red River is almost dead. The colonial process is killing it." His words rung out in lament, yet still he continued to return to the crucial importance of how people see the world shaping how we know ourselves and how we act. *If rivers have rights, like in Ecuador and New Zealand*, there is legal standing for their protection. When people see salmon, not as a single fish swimming, but as an expression of the health of the local living world, interconnected with rivers that connect spawning grounds with sea and ocean, with people, orcas, bears, wolves, trees, and soil health, then we can understand more of how worldview shapes practices of care. As Finkbonner described All Our Relations depicted in steel, she concluded by bringing attention to "our eagle, sacred to us all" and the "smudge bowl for hope, healing, and blessings." This Indigenous-led journey offered a resounding invitation for all people to stand together to protect salmon as a centerpoint of NW Native Nations.

Woodland Park Zoo and Se'Si'Le are in discussion to display Cyaltsa April Finkbonner's steel art *All Our Relations* at the WPZ in June of 2024, in association with Se'Si'Le's International Indigenous Forest Forum.

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The Wonder All Around Us

By Rev. Scott Tayler
Adapted by Rev. Victoria Poling

Think friends, of the sky,
of the stars that dance like fireworks overhead.
Think of the trees, budding or bare,
and the rivers and rain,
all a part of this living, breathing earth
that makes our living and breathing possible.
Think too, and look at, the faces that surround you;
What a wonder it is that we don't have to travel
this world alone.
All of it is miracle. All of it is mystery.
All of it deserves our awe.
And so, may the light we kindle in one another's presence,
In this time we share,
Illuminate the astonishing preciousness of it all.



House of Tears Carvers pole at the Se'Si'Le/Lummi Nation memorial service for orca Tokitae/Sk'aliChe'elh-tenaut/Lolita, San Juan Island, August 27, 2023 (photo©Rev. AC Churchill).
For more on this orca's story, please see salishsea.org/tokitae.

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