

## A Climate for Runoff & Our Response

by Kolya Braun-Greiner, MDiv



*And the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap... Joshua 3:16*

*The future is literally in our hands to mold as we like. But we cannot wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow is now. --Eleanor Roosevelt*

I walked down my street in my rubber boots and raincoat 2 weeks ago during that deluge of rain, to observe the status of our local branch of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Sligo Creek. Rainwater was gushing down our hill into the creek like a torrent of, Lord knows, how many gallons per minute? I pondered sadly: this is *just one* street, that flows into *just one* stream; how many other streets and streams are filling up with this high level of runoff?! This reality has been made even more crystal clear since I started this job with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, promoting tree planting as a way to contribute to stormwater runoff prevention. It's as if the "scales fell from my eyes." Now every time we have these "heavy downpours," I notice what's happening, and the urgent need for our response becomes even more relevant to me.

The [National Climate Assessment](#) released on May 5, 2014 included "heavy downpours" as one of the extreme weather events on the rise due to climate change. *Heavy downpours are increasing nationally, especially over the last three to five decades. The heaviest rainfall events have become heavier and more frequent, and the amount of rain falling on the heaviest rain days has also increased. Since 1991, the amount of rain falling in very heavy precipitation events has been significantly above average.* That being the case, we have even more reason for planting trees (and other [stormwater runoff management techniques](#)) to mitigate the effects of these "heavy downpours." And trees also mitigate climate change too: every tree sequesters 48 lbs. of carbon dioxide per year and an acre of trees absorbs enough carbon dioxide over one year to equal the amount produced by driving a car 26,000 miles!

We can't curtail the rain, but we can plant trees. Each and every step we take locally makes a difference in the amount of runoff that ends up polluting our local (fill in your local creek) and larger watershed, the Chesapeake Bay. "We cannot wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow is now." Our faith traditions call us to care for God's creation, so [let's get planting more trees!](#)

We're now expanding the 10,000 Trees Project beyond Maryland. Contact me to express your interest in engaging your congregation for 2015 tree planting: [kolya@interfaithchesapeake.org](mailto:kolya@interfaithchesapeake.org)