Global Climate Strike Worship Materials

On Friday, September 20th, people from around the globe are going to strike. The hope is that with millions of people declaring their frustration, world leaders will act. As Unitarian Universalist ministers, we are in a position to call more than 100,000 people to strike and our most effective means of doing that is through worship on September 15th. To make that service as easy as possible, we have collected and created resources to help you plan worship.

The Global Climate Strike on the 20th coincides with the beginning of a United Nations meeting on climate during which Greta Thunberg will address world leaders. This strike is being heralded around the world as a necessary, ongoing effort to force government to comply with the reality of our situation. There is more information available about the strike and more resources for worship if what you need isn’t here. Please contact Rev. Peggy Clarke for help. If you’d like to register your intention to participate, we’ve set up a Facebook Event found here. If you want more information we have a Google Doc that might help and you can go online for a bigger picture.

It might be useful to your congregation to remember that 1% of our entire denomination - 1,500 people – showed up in NYC for the People’s Climate March in 2014. We had the 2nd largest faith contingent in the entire march even though we were likely the smallest denomination. This action is far more low-impact because it can be done right where you are. We are powerful when we are committed.

Worship Resources

Welcome
This coming Friday, people all over the planet are going on strike. Millions of people are expected to walk out of work, of school, of the averageness of their days to make a clear and unequivocal statement to the leaders of this world: Act on Climate Now. Studies are clear. We have eleven years to make massive changes. After that, planet Earth, already showing signs of distress, already giving us a window into a dystopian future, will have passed the point of human aide. There will no longer be anything we can do. Eleven years. This worship service is designed to help us all shift into the reality of this crisis, to understand where the gardens of hope are most fertile and to propel us to action on Friday. Welcome. (Peggy Clarke)

Call to Worship
We assemble this morning in outrage and optimism
In fear for the future and hope for what’s possible.
We gather in the spirit of our ancestors who pushed through difficult times
And we gather in the spirit of our children who need us to be as strong.
We join with each other in worship this morning, that critical activity of the heart and soul, where we confront real Truth, acknowledge our trepidation and step into our power.
Come...let us worship together. (Peggy Clarke)

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CALL TO WORSHIP by Gretchen Haley (adapted)
   A: Because the tides are rising
   B: So must we
   C: Rise!
      A: to this moment
   C: Rise!
      B: to this day
   C: Rise!
      A: to this life
      B: This place in the web
A: That is yours, and ours.

C: Rise!
B: Because the earth remains
A: Our only home
A: And we
B: Fellow travelers
A: Its only hope
B: For healing
A: Wholeness

C: Rise!
B: Before the mystery
A: Before the big bang
B: That started it all
B: That this infinite universe

C: Rise!
A: Or surrender
B: With gratitude
A: For this beauty
B: This chance
A: To be a part of it all
B: To give back; to

C: Rise!
A: Life
B: Past,
A: Present,
B: Future
A: Everywhere, Always
B: As one
A: Come, let us worship, together
B: Let us

All: Rise!

**Opening Words**

Only with severe need did the hyphae curl around the alga; only when the alga was stressed did it welcome the advances. When times are easy and there’s plenty to go around, individual species can go it alone. But when conditions are harsh and life is tenuous, it takes a team sworn to reciprocity to keep life going forward.

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*

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We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for our relationship to the world. We need to restore honor to the way we live, so that when we walk through the world we don’t have to avert our eyes with shame, so that we can hold our heads up high and receive the respectful acknowledgment of the rest of the earth’s beings.


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Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us. Robin Wall Kimmerer -- *Braiding Sweetgrass*
**Chalice Lighting**
We light this chalice, the flame of our heritage, in solidarity with UUs and all the peoples of the world lighting candles of planetary hope. May it ignite a spirit of solidarity, and enthusiasm for the new world we can create, together. (Peggy Clarke)

**Readings**
The future hasn’t already been decided. That is, climate change is an inescapable present and future reality, but the point of the IPCC report is that there is still a chance to seize the best-case scenario rather than surrender to the worst. Natan Sharansky, who spent nine years in a gulag for his work with Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, recalls his mentor saying: “They want us to believe there’s no chance of success. But whether or not there’s hope for change is not the question. If you want to be a free person, you don’t stand up for human rights because it will work, but because it is right. We must continue living as decent people.” Right now living as decent people means every one of us with resources taking serious climate action, or stepping up what we’re already doing.

...Taking action is the best way to live in conditions of crisis and violation, for your spirit and your conscience as well as for society. It’s entirely compatible with grief and horror; you can work to elect climate heroes while being sad. There are no guarantees – but just as Sakharov and Sharansky probably didn’t imagine that the Soviet Union would dissolve itself in the early 1990s, so we can anticipate that we don’t exactly know what will happen and how our actions will help shape the future.

The histories of change that have made me hopeful are often about small groups that seem at the outset unrealistic in their ambition. ... Knowing that we don’t know isn’t grounds for confidence, but it is fuel against despair, which is a form of certainty. This future is as uncertain as it’s ever been. ---Rebecca Solnit

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E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G— is connected. The soil needs rain, organic matter, air, worms and life in order to do what it needs to do to give and receive life. Each element is an essential component. “Organizing takes humility and selflessness and patience and rhythm while our ultimate goal of liberation will take many expert components. Some of us build and fight for land, healthy bodies, healthy relationships, clean air, water, homes, safety, dignity, and humanizing education. Others of us fight for food and political prisoners and abolition and environmental justice. Our work is intersectional and multifaceted. Nature teaches us that our work has to be nuanced and steadfast. And more than anything, that we need each other—at our highest natural glory—in order to get free.

— Adrienne Maree Brown

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All ethics... rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of independent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the Community, but his ethics prompt him to co-operate... The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants; and animals or collectively: the land.

This sounds simple: do we not already sing our love for and obligation to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Yes, but just what and whom do we love? Certainly not the soil, which we are sending helter-skelter down-river. Certainly not the waters, which we assume have no function except to turn turbines, float barges and carry off sewage. Certainly not the plants, of which we exterminate whole communities without batting an eye. Certainly not the animals, of which we have already extirpated many of the largest and most beautiful species.

A land ethic ... affirms their right to continued existence... In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to ... member and citizen of it. It implies respect for [our] fellow-members, and respect for the community [in its entirety].

---Aldo Leopold’s *Land Ethic* (1949)

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We can and now must redesign human societies based on love, justice and planetary boundaries so that no person or society is left to face devastating consequences and we learn to restore nature together. Faced with toxic systems that are destroying all life on Earth, affirmation of this vision and rebelling against whatever gets in its way becomes a sacred duty for all. We can and must succeed in catalysing a peaceful revolution to end the era of fossil fuels, nature extraction and capitalism.

Ending domination over nature goes hand in hand with tackling all forms of domination and hierarchy. The struggle for climate justice is also the struggle for racial, gender, sexual and economic equality.

--- Farhana Yahim, environmental lawyer, This Is Not a Drill

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In our prophecies as Anishinaabe people, we are told that there is a choice between two paths. This is known as the time of the Seventh Fire. And in the time of the Seventh Fire, we are told that we, as Anishinaabe people, would have a choice between two paths. One path, they say, would be well worn, but scorched. The other path, they say, would be not well worn, and it would be green. And it would be our choice upon which path to embark.

So this is the scorched path. This is what fracking looks like from the air. It is what is known as extreme extraction. Extreme extraction is what occurs when you have consumed as much of the fossil fuels resources of this world as we have. In my life and your life, we’ve consumed about half the world’s known fossil fuel resources, right? … I had a good time. Did you all have a good time? Let’s be honest. It’s been a blast. We’ve had a really good time consuming at this level. … did you guys all get your flowers from Colombia this week? You know what I’m saying. Sometimes I just like to order that Fiji water—you know what I’m talking about? —because I feel like I should have water from the furthest part of the planet. You understand what I’m saying. This is like—it is absurdity, the level of the fossil fuels economy and our level of consumption and entitlement associated with that. We are complicit. That is the fact. Winona LaDuke

Responsive Readings
RESPONSIVE READING FROM THE 2006 STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

Earth is our home.

We are part of this world and its destiny is our own.

All life will be gravely affected unless we embrace new practices, ethics, and values to guide our lives on a warming planet.

As Unitarian Universalists, how can our faith inform our actions to remedy and mitigate climate change?

We declare by this Statement of Conscience that we will not acquiesce to the ongoing degradation and destruction of life that human actions are leaving to the next generation.

We are called to join with others to halt practices that fuel climate change, and to mitigate impending effects with just and ethical responses.

As a people of faith, we commit to a renewed reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

We envision a world in which all people are assured a secure and meaningful life that is ecologically responsible and sustainable, in which every form of life has intrinsic value.

Unitarian Universalists are called to defer to a balance between our individual needs and those of all other organisms. Entire cultures, nations, and life forms are at risk of extinction while basic human rights to adequate supplies of food, fresh water, and health as well as sustainable livelihoods for humans are being undermined.

To live, we must both consume and dispose. Both our consumption and our disposal burden the interdependent web of existence. To sustain the interdependent web, we must burden it less while maintaining the essentials of our lives.
Our world is calling us to gather in community and respond from our moral and spiritual wealth; together we can transform our individual and congregational lives into acts of witness, discarding our harmful habits for new behaviors and practices that will sustain life on Earth, ever vigilant against injustice.

Affirming that we are of this earth and that humankind has brought about global climate change, we, as a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, pledge to ground our missions and ministries in reverence for this earth and responsibility to it as we undertake these personal practices, congregational actions, and advocacy goals.

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The World According to Shug (Alice Walker, adapted)
HELPED are those who love the entire cosmos rather than their own tiny country, city, or farm, for to them will be shown the unbroken web of life and the meaning of infinity.

HELPED are those who create anything at all, for they shall relive the thrill of their own conception, and realize a partnership in the creation of the Universe that keeps them responsible and cheerful.

HELPED are those who love the Earth, their mother, and who willingly suffer that she may no die; in their grief over her pain they will weep rivers of blood, and in their joy in her lively response to love, they will converse with trees.

HELPED are those whose every act is a prayer for harmony in the Universe, for they are the restorers of balance to our planet. To them will be given the insight that every good act done anywhere in the cosmos welcomes the life of an animal or a child.

HELPED are those who find the courage to do at least one small thing each day to help the existence of another - plant, animal, river, or other human being. They shall be joined by a multitude of the timid.

HELPED are those who lose their fear of death; theirs is the power to envision the future in a blade of grass.

All: HELPED are those who love and actively support the diversity of life; they shall be secure in their differentness.

Time for All Ages

Best to practice this with a group of people who are the approximate number of children/youth you expect. This toy conducts the natural electricity that flows between living things, lighting up and making noise when the circuit is unbroken. It is a great way to demonstrate that the interdependent web of all existence is not just words, but actually exists and can be made visible.

Gather together in a circle. Speak about the interdependent web, ask if anyone has ever seen it? (No) Let’s try to make it visible! Hold one side of the Energy Stick and ask the person next to you to hold the other side, both of you being sure to hold it in the right place. Does it light up? Nope (because the circuit is not complete). Ask the other person to hold hands with the person on the other side. Can we see it now? No? Well, that’s disappointing. I wonder why not. Ask everyone in the circle to hold hands but hold off on holding hands with the person on your other side. Can we see it now? No? Ahh, let’s try this: let’s make the circle whole! Now, hold hands with the person on your other side. The Energy Stick should now make sound and light up.

Talk about

- While we may not always be able to see the interdependent web, we can know it is there by its impact on the world
- The interdependent part – the strength of the web – is strongest when the circle is unbroken and all are included
As we work to heal the Earth, we must remember to include everyone, especially those most forgotten or made invisible – such as people suffering from asthma because they live in neighbors with poverty.

Written by Rev. Karen G. Johnston, East Brunswick, NJ

Sermons

House on Fire

REV. PEGGY CLARKE

(To Be Delivered) September 15, 2019

Community Church of New York

When my husband was in college, he was on the phone with his mom when he and she heard a little pop on the line. His mother said there was a big storm and she got off the phone. She then saw smoke from behind the couch and pulled it from the wall. Flames erupted. She called her husband upstairs who was already running down to get her. Lightening had hit the electrical system and every wall was on fire. They ran out of the house. It was engulfed in flame within minutes. Fire trucks were there before they’d even had the thought to call and neighbors ran from their houses to stand with the stunned couple.

Everyone who saw what was happening, reacted. They moved quickly, responding to the crisis in front of them. Emergency mode- we all have it. There’s no time to debate, no time to wonder about alternative options; there is only immediate action.

Today, we are also in crisis, but because the emergency is slower than lightening hitting the electric system, we aren’t responding. We’re in a climate emergency. We have very little time left to address it. The experts told us we had 12 years after which there’s no reversing the worst effects. It’s the planetary equivalent to the house in flames. We’re already experiencing what they call the mild effects, the storms, the floods, the draughts, the disappearing of entire species. That 12 year warning, that was a year ago. A year has passed and nothing has happened. We now have 11 years.

This ancient planet was formed slowly, creating an unusual mixture of oxygen, carbon dioxide and methane which encouraged wild, diverse, immense life. Earth formed as a living system that promotes life in water, on land, in the air, all part of a balanced and astounding ecosystem on which generations of countless species have depended. Now this balance is radically threatened largely as a result of the mining and burning of fossil fuels used in transportation, and the mass clearing of trees for cattle, palm oil and soy production.

We lose about 40 football fields of forest every minute. 58,000 wildfires burned millions of acres of land last year. Half the world’s wetlands are gone, half of the corals are dead and three quarters of the oceans are fished to capacity with a warning that there will be no more fish in the sea in 30 years; there are more than 400 dead zones in the ocean; plants and animals are disappearing a thousand times faster than ever before leaving nearly one million species on the brink of extinction while Earth’s ice fields are melting and the world of nature is disappearing at our own hand.

How is it possible that we have created a crisis of such magnificent proportions? Our economic system, requiring growth every quarter failed to recognize that we live on a finite planet, that infinite growth is impossible. The political and financial systems on which our nation rests, the Industrial Growth Society, guaranteed this outcome as soon as it was created. And yet, here we are, taken by surprise as we teeter on the edge of ecological collapse.

We are in crisis. Our house is on fire. It’s is an almost incomprehensible emergency and for the sake of planetary survival, environmental action has to become the hallmark of this next decade. Much of the public discourse focuses on the small picture, on instrumental remedies that don’t begin to recognize the urgency of our reality, that lack acknowledgment of the massive crisis we’re facing. Earth cannot wait. Our planet, our mother Gaia, who has for millennia sustained the life of incalculable species, has been so violated and exhausted by her most recent offspring that her own survival is now in our hands, we, her youngest and most reckless child.

The tectonic plates of unsustainable commerce and insatiable consumption are shifting dangerously beneath us. It’s not just an empire falling, but the platform of creation itself, falling under the weight of our wants,
our greed, our ignorance and arrogance, our waste, our need, our mechanization, our militarization, our exponentially increasing population that stands at the top of a food chain on the verge of depletion. Our planet, once the support of all life, now herself needs life-support, and for the most part, until this moment, the generational cohorts of modernity—particularly our captains of industry and government—have been clueless, callous or obstructionist. Now we face ecocide and find ourselves bereft of even the moral, theological and legal categories to address it.

This might all sound extreme. Unnecessarily alarming. Maybe hyperbolic. I wish it were. Greta Thunberg, the 16 year old climate activist who is in NY this week to address the United Nations told world leaders recently:

“Our house is on fire... We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people. And now is not the time for speaking politely or focusing on what we can or cannot say. Now is the time to speak clearly... You say nothing in life is black or white. But that is a lie. A very dangerous lie. Either we prevent 1.5C of warming or we don’t. Either we avoid setting off that irreversible chain reaction beyond human control or we don’t. Either we choose to go on as a civilization or we don’t. That is as black or white as it gets. There are no grey areas when it comes to survival... Adults keep saying: ‘We owe it to the young people to give them hope.’ But I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act like your house is on fire because it is.”

Our house is on fire. This isn’t time for long discussions. This is time for massive mobilization, a World War Two level effort to transform the systems that have brought us here. We need to get out of coal immediately. We have no need for it and its use is killing us and our planet. We need to drop all unconventional fossil fuel sources like fracking and tar sands and mountaintop removal and stop drilling for oil reserves. We need to impose a massive carbon tax on corporations, tax right at the source, and return that money to households who reduce their fossil fuel consumption. These things need to be done now. If we grasped the concept that our house is on fire, this could be accomplished in 6 months.

Stage two is the phasing out of oil and gas. We don’t need to drill any more. We have enough in store to burn the planet to ash several times over. Drilling should stop immediately. We then burn what have over the course of the next few years while we make the massive move to renewable energy.

These things can be done now. Everything we need to survive this crisis is at our disposal. We have access to free power. Wind and solar can provide for all our basic needs. The cost of solar panels is dropping exponentially, creating accessible options for walking away from fossil fuels permanently.

Will the world be different if we stop burning oil? Yes! Yes, the world will be different. We’re going to have to stop thinking about our convenience as the top priority. We won’t be able to jump on a plane to spend a long weekend in Santa Monica or Paris. It’s not that we can’t get there. California is a 4 day train and Paris is a 2 week boat ride. But the current assumption that everything is available to us all the time whenever we want it has to be tempered with our physical realities. We’ve designed a fantasy world in which we eat bananas in New York year round and pay less than a quarter each. Yes, things will change.

The paradigm shift we need is frightening. The honest consideration of our reality, of the ecological collapse we’re facing is overwhelming. The anxiety is debilitating. We need to have the courage to let our hearts break, to face into our terrifying reality, to feel our vulnerability and our overwhelming sadness at all that’s lost. We pretend this isn’t happening, that those telling us the stories are exaggerating or aren’t concerned with things that really matter, but most of that is just a protection from grief. Our situation is real and it’s horrible and if we’re going to survive, we need to feel it.

I do everything I think one person can do. I recycle and eat locally and drive a hybrid. But I feel powerless in the face of the massive crisis we’re facing. If my house were on fire, I’d grab the family and run out. But the house on fire is the entire planet and putting it out requires an overhaul of all our systems and there’s simply nothing I can do, no real impact I can make, whether or not I stop using disposable straws.

So, if I let my heart break, where does that get me? Now I’m just powerless and heartbroken.

But we aren’t powerless. The two greatest technologies of the 20th century are solar panels and civil disobedience. This isn’t out of our hands. In fact, our salvation is at our fingertips. And, if it’s not in our hands, then no one’s got it because the people with the political power are doing nothing or not doing enough or are stopping people from doing what needs to be done. This is where we become absolutely necessary. Without us, there’s nothing. We the People are going to exercise our right to force change and we’re doing it on Friday.
I’m calling on you – every person who can hear my voice – you have now been called to action. We are joining a global climate strike. This Friday, people from nearly every nation on this planet will say Enough. The house is on fire! We have no choice but to run out screaming.

You might remember a global climate strike by students in March. Millions of students around the world walked out of school in a mass demonstration of power. They said learning is irrelevant if we don’t stop the planet from burning. There is no future for them if the platform for that future is on fire.

And now they’re asking the adults to join them. On Friday, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is meeting across town and people in nearly every country are acting to get their attention. Students are walking out of school, adults are walking out of work and retired people are taking to the streets to amplify the urgency of this situation and our commitment to real change. On Friday, we are shutting it all down.

We are getting the attention of every world leader telling them we are done with their negotiations and want action now. We are disrupting business as usual to dismantle the system that will disrupt life permanently.

There are many signs of hope even as our house burns. Ethiopia is planting 4 billion trees before fall to combat deforestation. 350 million trees were planted in a single day this summer by citizens who have a vision of a new world. Major cities like New York, London and Sydney have declared climate emergencies allowing them to respond in appropriately. The UK declared its intention to be carbon neutral by 2050 and all estimations say they’ll hit that target before that. Costa Rica will be fossil fuel free by 2021. In the face of the US pulling out of the Paris Agreement, most of the other countries defiantly showed their meddle in keeping and increasing their promises at a recent climate meeting, demonstrating that even without the US, the rest of the world will move forward. That defiance is found closer to home, too, with more than 100 cities and counties across the country transitioning to 100 percent clean energy. Germany produced enough renewable energy in the first half of 2018 to power every household in the country for the entire year.

The massive mobilization is possible. I’m calling on you to step into your power this Friday. Use your body as I’ll use mine to be counted among the people who are not going to allow our leaders to fiddle…on a golf course…while Earth burns. Walk out of work. Organize your school. Take to the streets. Take to social media. Raise your voice with the millions of other people who are raising their voices to be heard by the handful of people who can turn this crisis around.

Our house is in fire and we are the firefighters. Let’s get to work.

This Is Not A Drill
Rev. Karen G. Johnston
East Brunswick, NJ

Let me begin with gratitude.
Gratitude for the breath that found me awake this morning.
Gratitude for the breath that found you awake this morning.
Gratitude for the invitation to preach here this morning.
Gratitude for the beauty of this place, this land, this corner of the earth that is new to me.
Gratitude for the mosaic artist on my first day in Santa Fe who taught me how and then provided me space to make my first mosaic, making my heart sing.

We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.
We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts.
We act on behalf of life.

What powerful words in the midst of a topic – in the midst of a REALITY – that is so heavy it is leaden beyond leaden, it is difficult to offer the proper invitation, sufficient space, for full consideration.

I’ll say it again, a refrain for this sermon that I worry will leave you with too much despair. I’ll say it again for it is my hope that in our travels through climate grief we will come out the other side with a renewed commitment to action.

We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.
We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts.
We act on behalf of life.

Perhaps you know in your body.
Perhaps you know in your head.
Perhaps you know in that deep place of coherence beyond the binary, beyond the either/or, beyond the one or the other, inside the both and all:

We have moved past climate change to climate changeD.

Or climate catastrophe or crisis or constriction or chaos or emergency. Take your pick.

Instead of stopping global warming, there are those who have given up the notion of prevention and now speak of mitigation. Sometimes, folks with this worldview – and perhaps it is you – speak of adaptation, with forecasts of society as still recognizable, our current linear economy more or less intact, just smaller. This is so comforting, this vision.

There are those who speak of reversing the damage, of seeking salvation (and perhaps even redemption) through technology or artificial intelligence or a combination of both. Seeding the clouds, carbon capture. Perhaps this is you.

While I do not share these outlooks, I honor you.

There are those who believe we are well beyond the tipping point, yet believe that it is irresponsible to disseminate that perspective, no matter the science to back it up, for it raises despair. Perhaps this is you.

There are so many voices to listen to, some in resonance with each other, some in contradiction – and these are just the science-based ones. We can listen to David Wallace Wells who tells us that climate nihilism is just as much a delusion as climate denial. We can listen to Nathaniel Rich who basically tells us that it was no one’s fault that we didn’t act when we had the chance (that was in the 1980s) and at the same time it was and is everyone’s fault.¹

We can listen to the prophetic fiction writers of the 1990s who knew what was in store. Starhawk, with her Fifth Sacred Thing and Octavia Butler, with her Parable trilogy (that really only has two books) – I think that Reverend Gail preached here on the Parable of the Sower not all that long ago. A quarter of a century ago they were listening to the Earth, to activists and healers, could sense the path we have been on, are on.

And there are those now, in this time and in this place, who DO speak of collapse: “an uneven ending of our normal modes of sustenance, security, pleasure, identity, meaning and hope,”¹ a definition I borrow from Jem Bendell, who published last July a paper called, “Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy.” Bendell has created a community of folks, largely online, who have come to believe that collapse is both inevitable and imminent. They engage this worldview not out of cynicism, masochism, or even sadism, but out of a deep sense of love, and that clear-sightedness can only serve us, while denial will cause us, and the planet, even more harm. I am learning much in this community.

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Jem Bendell is just one voice in the environmental movement that is the Extinction Rebellion. Called XR for short, it is a global movement begun in May of last year in the United Kingdom. Non-violent, colorful, and creative in its approach, Extinction Rebellion is stunningly powerful and has been expanding quickly largely due to their success, and how their organizing gives people grieving and despairing real opportunities to make a difference in the here and now. They are the ones who got the UK to declare carbon neutrality by 2050 (and they continue to push for even sooner).

They are partnering with another organization, Climate Mobilization, to get municipalities to declare climate emergencies. Nearly 800 local governments in 17 countries have declared a climate emergency and committed to action to drive down carbon emissions at emergency speed.²

XR has emerged as part of the same Zeitgeist as the Sunrise Movement in this country and as the climate strike movement that has blossomed out of the actions of now 16-year-old Swedish Greta Thunberg when, last fall, she stopped attending school on Fridays. Instead, she sits outside her nation’s parliament building to demand that the government respond in a way that is proportionate to the emergency at hand.

With my own hapless sense of helplessness in the face of this mess we have created and continue to sustain, I bring curiosity and admiration and hope to these new and powerful movements. I am drawn to XR, and the people creating its culture, because there is explicit intersectionality – by which, I mean, there is attention to how dominance over nature connects with other forms of dominion, and that we cannot end dominion over nature without attending to all forms of cultural oppression – the struggle for climate justice, XR says, is also “the struggle for racial, gender, sexual, and economic equality.”³

Last month, XR published, This Is Not a Drill: An Extinction Rebellion Handbook. This 160-page book contains a diverse array of authors that include:

- a pithy description of Deep Adaptation and its four R’s (resilience, relinquishment, restoration, and reconciliation);
- an introduction to Donut Economics by Kate Raworth that reminds us it is possible to have an economy that makes us thrive, whether or not it grows, rather than the kind we currently have, which is an economy that grows, whether or not it makes us thrive;
- concrete steps for how to hold a successful non-violent, civilly-disobedient actions, including how to feed people, including the police officers assigned to actions;
- a deeply disturbing window into how the ultra-rich are preparing for collapse;
- a harrowing description of the impact on indigenous people in Chad;
- a tragic report from a fire fighter in the West who wrote anonymously, for fear of backlash;
- a nuanced approach to the New Green Deal that reminds us that finance should be servant to the economy and the ecosystem, not the other way ’round;

And it includes XR’s declaration of emergency, which ends with these three lines, familiar to you by now, so perhaps we can say the last line – we act on behalf of life – together:

We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.

We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts.

We act on behalf of life.

Extinction Rebellion has become an international movement with at least 650 groups in 45 countries. Clearly, their message and methods, while not appreciated by all, resonate as more and more people wake up to climate emergency, particularly in the wake of the IPCC report released last October that informed the world we have less than 11 years to make necessary changes.

My friend, Google Searchbar, tells me that though there is an XR presence in Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado, there does not seem to one here in New Mexico. No problem! There are many ways to be a part of the latest manifestation of saving Gaia, this living planet, of saving the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.

2 https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/climate-emergency-campaign

3 Yamin, Farhana. This Is Not a Drill.

4 https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/faqs/
I see that the Sunrise Movement is active not only in the state, but here in Santa Fe. Perhaps some of you are a part of it?

Perhaps you have already been following Greta Thunberg and the youth climate strike movement?

Have you heard that there is a call for a global strike on September 20\textsuperscript{5}? This is not just for students or youth, but for all of us. The call says,

“People all over the world will use their power to stop ‘business as usual’ in the face of the climate emergency. We will join young people in the streets to demand an end to the age of fossil fuels and emergency action to avoid climate breakdown.”

I am a part of a growing group of Unitarian Universalist leaders urging as many UU congregations and individuals to support and join the call for a global strike. If you do not yet have “strike for the climate” in your calendar, I hope you will take out your smartphone or your paper calendar -- yes, right now -- and put it in there.

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It turns out there are multiple kinds of climate denial. I recognize myself in all of them. Magical thinking that uncomfortable things will just go away on their own (especially if we don’t pay them too much attention). Or that science (AKA technology) might solve the problem and save the day. That if I recycle more, buy my clothes second-hand, drive my used Prius, I’m doing enough. There are big terms for the various kinds, like “interpretive denial” and “implicative denial.”

More important than fancy words are the antidotes to them. For me and my climate denial, what I have found that works best is balancing exposure to all-things-climate-chaos with surrounding myself with beauty, taking part in acts of creation, and staying connected to community.

This is why, in part, the prayer I offered today focused on beauty.

As a guest here, I feel the need to say aloud something you already know: you all live in a beautiful part of the world! Not only natural beauty, but all the public art! What a healing thing you have immediate access to -- to receive, to appreciate, no doubt to create! It is my prayer and wish that you use the art in your midst not to escape, but to be your buoy and buffer so that you can stay present to the harsh realities of the climate crisis.

Denial persuades us that the more we know about the climate emergency, the less hope we will feel. As I have danced with my own climate denial, I have learned that this is not necessarily true.

In fact, I want to suggest that having conversations about climate crisis, or emergency or even collapse normalizes these conversations, making room for the possibility of preparation, the possibility of action, the possibility of shift. This benefits society.

Taking seriously the possibility of crisis or collapse means that some of us will learn ways of better living and ways of making peace and bringing healing. Whether collapse happens or not, learning these ways and living into them will limit disease and destruction regardless.

They might even hold within them seeds for a positive future we cannot currently imagine.

It is not easy to make room in our psyches, in our heartminds, for the reality of climate chaos, no matter the scale. For if we did --for if we do --it means that it is not just other people who must stop “business as usual.” It is we who must do this. And must do it now, for time is ever so short. We must, in whatever ways our life circumstances allow, stretching beyond our comfort zones as much as possible, support or take part in the global climate strike.

To do so is to be a part of a world-wide collective action, which can raise up your personal sense of connection and our communal sense of hope. To do so is to embody and to make visible the interdependent web of existence of which we all are a part.

\textit{We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.}

\textsuperscript{5} https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/23/greta-thunberg-young-people-climate-strikes-20-september
We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts.
We act on behalf of life.
Amen. And may it be so.

Climate Strike Sermon
Rev. Jane Dwinell

This coming Friday, September 20th, is the day of the Global Climate Strike. Inspired by the young people who called for the school climate strike in March, they have now called on everyone to step outside of “business as usual,” to sound the alarm, and to get people — especially our elected officials — to face what is turning into more than just climate change, but climate collapse, climate disruption, climate chaos.


No. We don’t want to hear those words, we don’t want to admit that… well… maybe it’s simply too late to turn this ship around. The IPCC report issued last fall said we had twelve years to STOP what is going on. Not just slow it down, but to put a stop to the mining and burning of fossil fuels, increasing carbon and methane emissions, and our lifestyles — in the wealthy, predominately white part of the world. Now we have eleven years.

That’s not much time.

Oh, but wait, an article published by the BBC at the end of July said we have 18 months… until the start of 2020.

That’s really not much time.

I don’t have to bring on a litany of “bad climate news” reports. I’m sure you’re all well aware enough of melting sea ice, disappearing glaciers, extinction of multitudes of species, rising sea levels, increasingly chaotic weather, bigger storms, more droughts, more floods, stronger monsoons, more wildfires, more killer heat waves, more hurricanes and typhoons.

People in the “Global South” already understand this all too well, and they have little power to do anything about it. Many people who live on islands — in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and in the Gulf of Mexico — have had to abandon their homelands and move somewhere else. People who depend on water from glaciers and snowmelt in the mountains of South America and in the Himalayas are suffering from lack of enough water to irrigate their crops and to drink. People in Africa struggle to find enough water as well — Lake Chad has shrunk 90% — and/or they have been battered by typhoons that never usually hit their country, inundating homes and villages, destroying land with salt water so that it can no longer grow crops.

Jamie Margolin, 17-year-old climate activist, said it best:

“Many people trace the origins of today’s climate crisis to the Industrial Revolution, when humans first began to burn large amounts of coal, but the crisis’s true roots extend further back to the onset of colonialism. When European colonizers ventured to Africa, Asia, North and South America, they invariably plundered the local natural resources, damaged habitats, hunted species to extinction and often forced human inhabitants into slavery. Undergirding European colonialism was the assumption that everything on the earth was meant to be extracted, bought and sold — and to make an elite minority very rich. In the eyes of the colonizers, the “new” lands they encountered had no owners — no one had purchased them with a recognizable currency or could prove ownership with property records — so it was free pickings. Along with this attitude came the idea that nothing — not air, not water, not trees, not animals — was sacred or priceless.

“Colonialism’s mindset of heedless extraction, greed and human exploitation not only planted the seeds of today’s climate crisis, it remains visible in the crisis’s central injustice: although the poor are responsible for only a tiny
share of humanity’s greenhouse gas emissions, they generally suffer first and worst from the heatwaves, droughts, storms, rising seas and other effects of those emissions. Most countries in Asia, Africa and South America that endured centuries of colonization remain relatively poor today, and even countries like India and China whose prosperity is increasing emit much less per capita than do the rich countries in North America and Europe. Extreme weather and other climate impacts strike all over the world, but the rich are better positioned to withstand those impacts. The rich have the money to build seawalls, for example, and to operate satellites that warn about an impending hurricane so coastal dwellers can retreat to safety.”

Capitalist greed has gotten us to this point — the “heedless extraction, greed and human exploitation.” Slavery, human trafficking, the destruction of the Amazon rain forest, and the Canadian boreal forest that happen to be over the tar sands. Fracking that contaminates drinking water and causes earthquakes, industrial agriculture that destroyed the prairies, Native Americans forced out of their homes.

Yes, we can blame greed and capitalism, but in truth, we are all complicit. We bought into their “American Dream,” fell for the ads promising a better life, an easier life. We’ve purchased their products, we’ve been happy to have access to a personal vehicle rather than rely on the horse or public transportation. We’ve been delighted to buy whatever kind of food whenever we want in any season.

Hey, I like my car, my central heating, my hot water on demand, my choice to buy whatever kind of food I want, or take whatever kind of vacation I want.

But this has to change.

Because this is now an emergency.

18 months to stop carbon emissions.

Rebecca Solnit said, “Inside the word ‘emergency’ is ‘emerge’; from an emergency, new things come forth, the old certainties are crumbling fast, but danger and possibilities are sisters.”

We are headed into a dangerous time. But I’d like to think there are possibilities.

Many governments around the world now understand that this is an Emergency, and have declared a climate emergency for their jurisdiction. As of the end of July, 855 in 18 countries have declared this emergency.

This is one possibility.

And I can imagine many more — both verging on the dangerous and verging on the hopeful.

How are you feeling? I wander between grief and hope, many times during the day, many times during an hour.

This is uncomfortable. What kind of future do we have? What will happen to me and my loved ones? What will happen to all my hopes and dreams, my “bucket list,” all the things I want to do? What about health care — will I be able to get the kinds of treatments and medications I want? What about money — will I have enough to pay my bills, to plan for my retirement — or will I even get a retirement? What about food — will the floods and droughts affect my ability to get the food I want — or need? What about electricity, or transportation, or just plain old fun? Is it all over for us?

“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well,” Czech dissident, writer and statesman Václav Havel said, “but the certainty that something is worth doing no matter how it turns out.”

Sure, we’ve changed our lightbulbs, and insulated our homes, and probably we drive a fuel-efficient car. We
recycle. Maybe we eat locally, or have reduced our consumption of meat. We sign petitions to ban plastic straws, plastic bags, the Keystone XL pipeline, local natural gas pipelines, to ask our representatives to back the “Green New Deal.”

But, what if we sit with our grief? Our pain? Our sense of loss? Our feelings of inadequacy? How then shall we move through the world?

Dahr Jamail, author of The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption, said this:

“By way of the corporate capitalist industrial growth culture within which most of us have been raised and immersed, we have become disconnected from the planet we are so deeply part of. This, I believe, is the root cause of the climate crisis we now find ourselves in. Hence, the first step toward answering the question of “how to be” during this time, which must be answered before any of us can decide “what to do,” is to connect ourselves back to the planet. For we cannot begin to walk until our feet are on the ground.

“Each day I wake and begin to process the daily news of the climate catastrophe and the global political tilt into overt fascism. The associated trauma, grief, rage and despair that come from all of this draws me back to the work of Stan Rushworth, Cherokee elder, activist and scholar, who has guided much of my own thinking about how to move forward. Rushworth has reminded me that while Western colonialist culture believes in “rights,” many Indigenous cultures teach of “obligations” that we are born into: obligations to those who came before, to those who will come after, and to the Earth itself.

“Hence, when the grief and rage threaten to consume me, I now orient myself around the question, “What are my obligations?” In other words, “From this moment on, knowing what is happening to the planet, to what do I devote my life?”

“Each of us must ask ourselves this question every day, as we face down catastrophe.”

To what do I devote my life?
To what do I devote my life?

I have devoted my life recently to reducing suffering — the suffering caused because of climate change.

In January 2016 I went to Lesvos, Greece as part of a medical team that received the refugees as they came ashore on flimsy life rafts with inadequate lifejackets. As many of you may know, the Syrian War started partly because of climate change. For many years, Syria suffered a climate change-induced drought that caused many farmers to move into the cities to find work to support their families. Crowded conditions and a lack of enough food caused unrest, and a civil war was born.

The refugees seeking safe harbor in Greece came from Syria, and also from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and North Africa. They came with nothing but the clothes on their backs, their passports and papers tied around their necks in plastic bags. They came with the elderly in wheelchairs, with the family dog or cat, with babes tucked inside their father’s coats, and with many, many scared and wet children. These refugees were not terrorists, but people simply seeking safety, food, shelter, and peace for their families.

Day after day, in January, with freezing seas and cold winds, these refugees arrived after paying exorbitant prices to smugglers who piled them into boats with small outboard motors and enough gas, hopefully, to get them across the five miles of open Aegean Sea. Some poor man was given a brief lesson in running the motor — most of whom had never even been in a boat — and told to drive. They arrived sopping wet, hypothermic, hungry and cold. We helped them into dry clothes, warmed them with tea and camp fires, cared for their injuries and fears,
and sent them off to a UN-run refugee camp. Boat after boat, day after day, sometimes as many as 500 people arriving each day.

This past February, I was on the Texas-Mexico border doing the same thing with the Central American refugees — also driven from their homes by climate change, drought, and no way to grow food or make a living. There I was part of a team to welcome the families — not cold and wet this time, but exhausted from the heat and drought — who came, again, with nothing more than their papers and the clothes on their backs, hoping for a new life, a better life. Hundreds of people every day to whom I offered a meal, new clothes, diapers for their young children, and a hot shower.

These are the faces of climate change. These are the people that I see when I am making a decision about what to buy, what to do, and where to send my money. These are the people I see when I contact my legislators, when I plant my garden, when I work to build community. These are the people I will see when I strike for the climate on Friday.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome.”

Who will join me on Friday? Who is willing to take an example from all of these brave refugees, and disrupt “business as usual”? Who is willing to let it be known that “what they did to the least of these, they did to me”?

Who is willing to remember that we are truly connected by the interdependent web of all existence?

See you there.

Amen.

_Benedictions_
(Take a Deep Breath and Exhale.)
I add my breath to your breath,
That our days may be long on the earth,
That the days of our people and of all the plants and animals may be long,
That we shall be as one.
~ PUEBLO PRAYER

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Let’s drop the notion that we can manage our planet for own comfort and profit – or even that we can now be its ultimate redeemers. It is a delusion. Let’s accept, in its place, the radical uncertainty of our time, even the uncertainty of survival. ~ Joanna Macy

_Chalice Extinguishing_
Knowing how quickly the flame of truth may be extinguished,
How easily the chalice of fellowship broken,
Let us be vigilant in faith,
Keep peace in our hearts,
And make care for one another
The watchword of our lives together
So our light goes out-
Everywhere-
Into the world.

**Hymns**
Blue Boat Home (#1064)
Fire of Commitment (#1028)
For the Earth Forever Turning (#163)
This is My Song (#159)
For the Beauty of the Earth (#21)
We Are The Earth Upright (#303)
Ancient Mother (#1069)