

Report by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Missioner for Creation Care Diocesan Convention, November 2021

During diocesan convention, our prayers will be with the delegates of COP26, the crucial U.N. climate summit. Over the past year I continued to speak, write, preach, lead retreats, and advocate about the urgent call to protect God's Creation. In the midst of climate emergency, this year's key words are **network and collaborate**. In January 2021, I began serving as Creation Care Advisor for Episcopal Diocese of MA, which means that the two Episcopal dioceses in MA are now working more closely together on addressing climate crisis. What's more, we also have an opportunity to increase our collaboration with the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ (SNEUCC) – for which I also serve as Missioner for Creation Care – because SNEUCC just hired Rev. Emma Brewer-Wallin as its first Minister for Environmental and Economic Justice.

A small team of advisors (Creation Care Leadership Circle) meets with me monthly to brainstorm and pray. Maggie Sweeney needed to withdraw, and we were glad to welcome Rev. Nina Pooley and Rev. Michael Hamilton as new members of the circle, which also includes Edith Allison, Rev. Heather Blais, Rev. Dave Woessner, and Rev. Anna Woofenden.

How do we integrate awareness of climate emergency into our congregational and diocesan life? What needs to change in how we carry out our mission and ministry? How do we create a vibrant faith-based climate movement? These are questions I ask myself every day.

I hope you'll stay in touch – please subscribe to my newsletter, "Creation Care Network" e-News, which is released on the first of every month. You can sign up on the [Creation care page of our diocesan Website](#). I also hope you will [sign up to join CCJN, Creation Care Justice Network](#), which originated in Diocese of MA and now welcomes folks in the Diocese of Western MA. Let's bring together the gifts and passions of our two dioceses and see what we can create!

Some highlights (unless otherwise noted, all events were held online):

• Declaration of Climate Emergency:

Soon after starting my new job in Diocese of MA, I drafted a declaration of climate emergency that was released in March by the bishops of both dioceses in Massachusetts. In May, we planned and co-led with the Rev. Lise Hildebrandt 4 weekly webinars with guest speakers on PRAY, LEARN, ACT, and ADVOCATE (140 people registered). In June, we co-led 3 "listening circles" to discuss next steps and build network across MA.

Meanwhile, I attend biweekly meetings of CCJN's working group, Action & Advocacy; join quarterly CCJN plenary meetings; and help plan for special seasons (e.g., Earth Day, Creation Season). I spoke to Mission Strategy Committee of Diocese of MA (Creation justice is one of that diocese's three mission foci).

• Retreats:

Clergy Day retreat ("Emotional and Spiritual Resilience") offered separately to Diocese of WMA and Diocese of MA

Retreat ("Building Emotional and Spiritual Resilience") for The Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, held during the American Academy of Religion annual meeting

Retreat ("Building Emotional and Spiritual Resilience") for Pax Christi, Agape, Boston

Catholic Climate Covenant

Retreats for both Episcopal dioceses in MA: “Space for Jesus: An Advent Quiet Day”; “Lent and the Longing for God”; “Alive in the Spirit”; “Falling in Love with Earth”

Day-long retreat (“Rooted & Rising in Love”) for The BTS Center, with participants hailing from Texas, Iowa, NC, Maine, and elsewhere

• **Preaching:**

Preach and lead a forum for St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Long Beach, CA; Grace Church, Newton; St. Paul’s, Bedford; St. John’s Episcopal Church, Boulder, CO; Trinity Church, Chicopee; Old Cambridge Baptist Church, Cambridge

Preach in person at St. David’s, Agawam; St. John’s, Northampton (and celebrate Holy Communion)

Videotape several sermons for DioWMA, including one for Earth Day

Help lead in-person worship at MassIP&L’s multi-faith worship service, “Love. Earth. Justice,” at Old South Church in downtown Boston

• **Speaking and teaching:**

Lead two-day Campbell Preaching Workshop on climate preaching (United Theological College, Montreal, Quebec)

Keynote speaker and workshop leader for a two-day conference, “Deep Green Faith: Earth-Hearted Hope in a Time of Crisis” (Center for Religion and Environment & Sewanee: University of the South)

Panelist for “Insight into best practices in ecumenical partner churches,” sponsored by the Department of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, reaching viewers in Greece, Australia, Ukraine

Lead evening program, “Lament as Spiritual Practice: Creation Care,” for the 3 South Berkshire congregations

With St. Benedict’s, Los Osos, CA (a congregation I visited in my whirlwind tour up the coast of CA in 2019), record a video on climate advocacy

Create a separate 30-minute video, “[Christians Advocate for Climate Health](#),” which presents six ways that Christians can engage in public advocacy for climate health and includes a [list of resources](#) and a [study guide](#).

Co-lead with Rev. Stephanie Johnson a course on climate preaching, for Bexley Seabury, with 14 students, mostly Episcopal and UCC clergy

Lead a SuperSaturday workshop for SNECUCC, “Eco-Contemplation”

Lead confirmation class on Creation Care 101 for DioWMA

Plenary speaker for Global Episcopal Mission Network 2021 conference on “Earthkeeping: Creation Care in Global Mission”

Guest teach for Professor Mark Silk’s course on Religion and Climate Change (Trinity College, Hartford)

Panelist for “It’s Not Too Late: A Conversation About Earth Optimism” (with composer Geoffrey Hudson, climate scientist Michael E. Mann, youth activists and members of Sunrise Movement), live at Academy of Music and livestreamed

Panelist for “Rooted and Rising” event at General Synod UCC, sponsored by The BTS Center (with Leah Schade, Jim Antal, and Natasha DeJarnett; 350 people registered)

Co-lead with Rev. Jim Antal a conversation about climate crisis preaching for both

Episcopal dioceses in MA and SNEUCC

Interviewed by “Spirit Matters,” an online spiritual hub

• **Publishing:**

“My kingdom does not belong to this world,” published in *A Stranger and You Welcomed Me: Homilies and Reflections for Cycle B*, ed. Deacon Jim Knipper (Clear Faith Publishing, 2020) (all proceeds go to organizations that help refugees, immigrants and the undocumented)

“Climate Change, Addiction, and Spiritual Liberation,” in *Religions*, Vol. 12, Issue 9 (September 2021), as part of the Special Issue “Spirituality and Addiction.” Available online: <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/9/709/htm>

“[Preaching when life depends on it: climate crisis and Gospel hope](#),” Anglican Theological Review (May 2021, Vol. 103, 2), pp. 208–219 (The same issue also included a strong review of *Rooted and Rising!*)

“[Grieving the trees](#),” published by The Center for Action and Contemplation in its Daily Meditations by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, in a series entitled “The Contemplative Call to Nature” (April 21, 2021)

A sermon excerpt published in “Planting Seeds of Hope: 40 Devotions on Creation,” a Lent 2021 booklet to honor the memory of Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya, the first woman bishop in Africa and one of the pioneer Eco Bishops of the Anglican Communion

“Moved by the effort to save cherry trees,” Letter to the Editor, Daily Hampshire Gazette

Submitted, but not yet published:

“Psychological and Spiritual Resilience in a Time of Climate Crisis: Where Psychiatry and Religion Meet,” for a forthcoming anthology by American Psychiatric Association

A short piece for *Creation Care Bible Challenge*, ed. Marek Zabriskie, for Forward Movement

16 meditations for “Connections to Creation,” *Sundays and Seasons 2023, Year A*

A sermon for anthology, *Thirsty, and You Gave Me to Drink: Homilies and Reflections for Cycle C* (ed. Jim Knipper)

• **Blog posts:**

“[Climate Crisis Preaching: Selected Resources](#)”

“[An appeal to Congressman Richard Neal: No cuts in climate, care, jobs, or justice](#)”

“[Pray, learn, act, and advocate: MA bishops declare climate emergency](#)”

• **Social Justice Commission**

Signed various eco-justice petitions, including letters opposing Eversource’s planned pipeline expansion; urging President Biden to significantly increase funding for the Endangered Species Act FY22; opposing Line 3; opposing toxic biomass; telling EPA to close fossil fuel industry loophole leading to asthma-causing smog; appealing to Congress to enact a federal Renewable Electricity Standard, etc.

“Bending toward Justice”: lead breakout group on Creation care for our annual diocesan social justice conference

• **Good News Gardens:**

With the Rev. Anna Woofenden and the Rev. Heather Blais, helped complete a TEC Evangelism grant application, which we received; also helped complete a Seed Grant from Province One, which we received. Both Episcopal dioceses in MA participated in the launch-

year of Good News Gardens, with Rev. Anna Woofenden serving as Program Director.
Lead Good News Gardens webinar (“Tending the Garden, Tending the Soul”)

- **“A Passion for the Planet”:**

Worked on publicity for the opportunity to record the closing chorale, “Holy Earth, Ancient Home,” for COP26

- **Public advocacy:**

Protest Line 3 (new tar sands pipeline in northern Minnesota being built by Enbridge across Native lands): attend GreenFaith webinars on Line 3 protest; meet with the Rev. Melanie Mullen, Phoebe Chatfield, and others in TEC to discuss strategies to increase Episcopal engagement; join sit-in at Waltham headquarters of Enbridge, which led to a 26-hour blockade of the office and 3 arrests

Urge funding of infrastructure bills: speak at “Fight for Our Future Rally” at rally outside Springfield office of Congressman Richard Neal

Strengthen COP26: attend conference calls and publicize Faiths4ClimateJustice (GreenFaith initiative to hold worldwide multi-faith climate events Oct. 17-18 before COP26

- **Other affiliations and connections:**

Blessed Tomorrow: meet quarterly as member of Leadership Circle; meet with mental health practitioners and faith leaders to discuss collaboration around climate change; my body prayer video broadcast at American Climate Leadership Summit

Episcopal Relief and Development: join a webinar on disaster preparedness in Province One

National Religious Coalition on Creation Care: assist with webinar on forests and faith, and edit letter to Congress

Mass. Interfaith Power & Light (MassIPL): help with fundraising, with a focus on “Solar Equity Project” (to bring clean, renewable energy to houses of worship in environmental justice communities across Mass.) and “Faith in Action Teams” (to advocate for climate justice in Mass.)

World Resources Institute: represent both Episcopal dioceses in MA as WRI initiates a new program on faith and sustainability – details to follow!

Respond to inquiries from – among many others – creation care team of Diocese of Virginia; Rev. Norman MacLeod, first Coordinator of Creation Care in Diocese of RI; and creation justice task force of the Mountain Sky Conference, United Methodist Church (Colorado, Utah, Montana, and Wyoming), which includes 300+ churches

- We celebrated our diocese’s eighth annual **Season of Creation** (September 1-October 4). Resources are posted on our [Creation Season Website](#) to help us learn, pray, act, and advocate. These materials are updated periodically and are available year-round, so please use them anytime!

- To view more than 100 sermons about Creation care, plus articles, books, blog posts, media, schedule, etc., please visit my Website, [RevivingCreation.org](#).

Please join the conversation on our Facebook page, [Creation Care](#).

Thank you for your prayers and actions as we work to safeguard “this fragile Earth, our island home.”

-- Submitted by (the Rev. Dr.) Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (mbj@revivingcreation.org)