

**Report by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Missioner for Creation Care  
Diocesan Convention, November 2020**

*Climate change has spread its wings.* That sober comment came from a friend of mine in California. As I write, historic wildfires are blazing on the West coast, another hurricane is roaring toward the Gulf, and the Greenland ice sheet is melting faster than anyone had expected. The anguish caused by a changing climate is vividly real. Rooted in our Gospel faith, we rise up to protect every neighbor – human and more-than-human – that we can. We pray, learn, act, and mobilize.

Over the past year I wrote, spoke, preached, led retreats, and advocated about the urgent call to protect God’s Creation. This ecumenical ministry took me across Massachusetts and to places far and wide, until the coronavirus abruptly stopped me in my tracks and upcoming events were either canceled or went online.

Some highlights:

- For me, the most exciting news of late 2019 was the publication of [\*Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis\*](#). The anthology, which I co-edited with my friend Leah Schade, features 21 essays by faith-based leaders in the climate movement, along with study questions and spiritual practices. Earth Day Network included it on its list of eleven environmental books to read in the winter of 2020, and I was interviewed by Citizens Climate Radio and by a radio station in Oregon. The BTS Center in Portland, Maine, convened a series of conversations about the book. *Rooted & Rising* is being read in academic settings as well as by individuals and church groups.
- Also, in late 2019, I gave the keynote address for an interfaith forum in Connecticut, “Reality, Hope, and Action in a Time of Climate Change.”
- I led a two-day conference in the Diocese of Southwest Florida on “Caring for Creation: Call to Action,” for The Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross.
- With Rev. Mariama White-Hammond I led part of a conference on “Faith, Conflict, and Environmental Justice” at Boston University School of Theology.
- I served as the chaplain and preacher for our 118<sup>th</sup> Diocesan convention, whose theme was “Holy Earth, Holy People: Restoring God’s Creation.” I will never forget how uplifting it was to hear excerpts of Geoffrey Hudson’s “A Passion for the Planet” performed during the Eucharist! I was also thrilled when the convention passed our third Creation care resolution in as many years, “Good News for All Creation.” Thank you, friends!
- At Trinity College (Hartford, CT), I spoke at a faculty luncheon and led a class for “Religion and Ecology.”
- I co-led an evening program with Rabbi Ellen Bernstein, “Climate Change, the Land, and Spirituality: Making the Connections,” at Hampshire College.
- I wrote a Letter to the Editor for *Orthodoxy in Dialogue* and co-wrote an op-ed, “Greta Thunberg compels us all to be prophets,” which was published in Daily Hampshire Gazette and

in two newspapers in Kentucky. I was also interviewed for the Daily Hampshire Gazette article, “Confronting climate change: Facing down the emotional and psychological costs of environmental chaos.”

- In what seemed a perfect way to complete 2019, I participated in a protest rally in Holyoke at ISO-New England, the entity that oversees our region’s grid. Later, in 2020, I joined a Black Lives Matter rally in downtown Northampton.
- In early 2020 I led a two-day “intensive” for the Episcopal Church in Colorado, which has chosen climate change as one of its primary areas of focus. I was also glad to connect with the new Canon for Creation Care in the Diocese of Arizona, a colleague in ministry!
- I contributed a prayer to the fourth edition of “Standing in the Need of Prayer: Spiritual Voices/Envisioning Just Peace with Earth,” distributed through Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries.
- I rejoice that the Diocesan Creation Care Network had a chance to meet in person at the diocese’s first-annual “Bending Toward Justice” retreat, in January 2020. Eighteen people joined our breakout group. I look forward to our next conversation, although it may need to be held online.
- I visited the US-Mexico border wall at Arizona’s Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and was interviewed by a reporter; the clip aired on a Phoenix TV station.
- I joined [Clergy Emergency League](#), a new grassroots network of Christian clergy who are concerned about the rise of authoritarianism in this country. Are you a member of the clergy who is concerned that Christianity is being coopted to advance policies of violence and oppression? Please join us.
- I preached (in person and remotely) in Episcopal and UCC churches in Massachusetts, Colorado, Arizona, and DC. Two outstanding preaching experiences include preaching (remotely) for the Washington National Cathedral at the service of Holy Eucharist to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day and preaching six sermons (remotely) as the first chaplain for the new Chautauqua Institute, based in New York, on the theme, “Faith for the Earth.” I was also blessed to have my first opportunity in many years to preach on Easter Sunday (at a UCC church in Williamstown).
- Several of my sermons were posted online at [Sustainable-Preaching.org](#), an online resource for lectionary-based sermons about Creation care.
- I wrote 14 entries for publication in *Sundays and Feasts*, a lectionary-based annual guide to worship planning that is produced by Augsburg Fortress. Look for my entries in 2022 – this outfit definitely plans ahead.
- With Leah Schade I co-wrote “6 Lessons Coronavirus Can Teach Us About Climate Change” for Earth Day Network in the lead-up to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. The piece was re-published in Daily Hampshire Gazette and in the 2020 Earth Day Digital Flip Book, an annual section inserted into regional Southern California newspapers, including the L.A. Times.

- At the request of Chautauqua Institute, I wrote a devotional prayer during a time of pandemic, which was included in a Green Anglican Network newsletter.
- I was one of the panelists for a webinar on “Coronavirus and the Climate Crisis: Connections, Comparisons, and Lessons” organized by UCC Council for Climate Justice. I was also a panelist for a webinar about *Rooted & Rising*, sponsored by Wisconsin Green Muslims. Because webinars seem to be The New Thing We Do, I was also a panelist for the webinar, “Honest to God: Earth Day” (along with Bishop David Rice, Traci Blackmon, and Stephanie Spellers) that was organized by Washington National Cathedral and the Office of the Presiding Bishop.
- I met periodically via Zoom with other Creation care leaders in The Episcopal Church as we planned how to implement the Creation Care Pledge and how to mark Creation Season.
- In the category of The Year’s Most Unlikely Event, I did two live interviews for The Weather Channel’s program, “Forecasting Hope.”
- This year we launched a Creation Care Leadership Circle in the diocese – a group of thought-leaders who meet with me monthly and help me think about how our Church can address the climate crisis. Its members include Edith Allison, Rev. Heather Blais, Rev. Peter Swarr, Maggie Sweeney, Rev. Dave Woessner, and Rev. Anna Woofenden. Thank you, friends!
- The Sustain Island Home diocesan team also meets with me monthly via Zoom. In recent weeks we decided that the immediate goal was to focus on the November election, so, many of us wrote postcards to voters in rural Texas, courtesy of Reclaim the Vote and Mothers Out Front. We also identified a long-term need in the diocese: finding a leader to shepherd the Creation care network and to help mobilize political advocacy.

In the meantime, everyone is invited to sign up their household with the carbon tracker, [Sustaining Earth, Our Island Home](#). This Website provides tools to reduce our household carbon emissions and make good choices in the five areas that matter most (how we heat and electrify our homes; how we transport ourselves; what we eat; and how we handle waste).

For questions about Sustain Island Home, please contact the Rev. Eric Elley (phone: 860/394-8728; email: eelley (at) live.com). Other faithful members of our diocesan team include Edith Allison, Sandy Muspratt, Chris Riddle, DeAnne Riddle, and Lucy Robinson. Thank you!

- With my husband’s help I recorded a short meditation, “[Praying with Our Body](#),” for American Climate Leadership Summit, which was hosted this summer by ecoAmerica.
- We are now celebrating our diocese’s seventh 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!
- As a special offering this year, we organized a four-week Creation Season Preaching Circle that I co-led with Rev. Anna Woofenden. With two dozen registrants from both the Diocese of Massachusetts and the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, our conversations included a guest speaker, followed by discussion of how to preach Creation care sermons based on the lectionary.

- In the leadup to the crucial November election, I drafted a statement for the Diocese that encouraged voting and taking action to protect voting rights around the country. The statement was signed by our Bishop, Social Justice Commission, Beloved Community Commission, and diocesan Missioners.

- My newsletter, “Creation Care Network” e-News, is sent out every month. To subscribe, sign up on the [Creation care page of our diocesan Website](#). (The newsletter connects our diocese with Creation care advocates from as far away as the Diocese of South Dakota!)

To subscribe to my occasional blog posts, please visit my Website, [RevivingCreation.org](#).

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

A few weeks ago, I launched a YouTube channel for sermons and talks, to augment the videos already posted at RevivingCreation.org. Please visit!

- According to a new study from Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, despite the global pandemic and the “finite pool of worry” theory, public engagement in the issue of climate change remains at or near historic high levels.

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](mailto:mbj@revivingcreation.org))