

Thank you for joining me today for adult formation here at SPR. We are starting a series on faith and justice, and today's justice issue is climate change.

Let's start with a few questions-and you can answer yes to more than one of them:

Who liked the 60 degree weather we had for Christmas?

Who has any knowledge of what is happening in Australia?

How is our Christmas weather similar to what is happening in Australia?

Our heat wave at Christmas showed approximately a 30 degree increase in the average temperature. So have Australia's heat waves-except they are in the southern hemisphere so for them this time of year that means reaching 107 degrees Fahrenheit.

That coupled with drought has brought on two months of brushfires, now spreading to the size of Belgium. It is estimated that 9 people and half a million animals, including 1/3 of the koala population, have been killed. The heat waves are looking to continue so it is unclear when the brushfires stop.

Climate Change is here, and increased action must be taken. I hope you will join me in that commitment today.

My experience relevant to today

- Studied ecological theology at St. Xavier University
- Interned at the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice
- Currently work on the admin team for Openlands
 - An Urban Land Trust that addresses climate change through land preservation & community engagement

A collage of three images. The left image shows a woman wearing a winter hat and jacket, smiling next to a white alpaca. The middle image shows a table covered with a green cloth, displaying various fresh vegetables like carrots, leafy greens, and herbs in small containers. The right image shows a garden scene with pink flowers in a vase and green plants in a raised bed.

My name is Jenny Jeck. I joined SPR almost 2 years ago with my husband Juan. Prior to that I was Catholic. I share this because while not all of the theology I draw upon today will be Catholic, the majority of it will be.

The top two experiences I will be drawing upon are studying ecological theology at Saint Xavier University, and the time I spent at the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN-a ministry of the Sisters of Providence

Currently, I work at Openlands and provide administrative support for the staff doing land preservation and community engagement work. We recently had a day long climate change training, and I will draw on a few items I learned then.

Now that you know where I am coming from, let's look at how we'll spend our time together.

Plan for our time today:

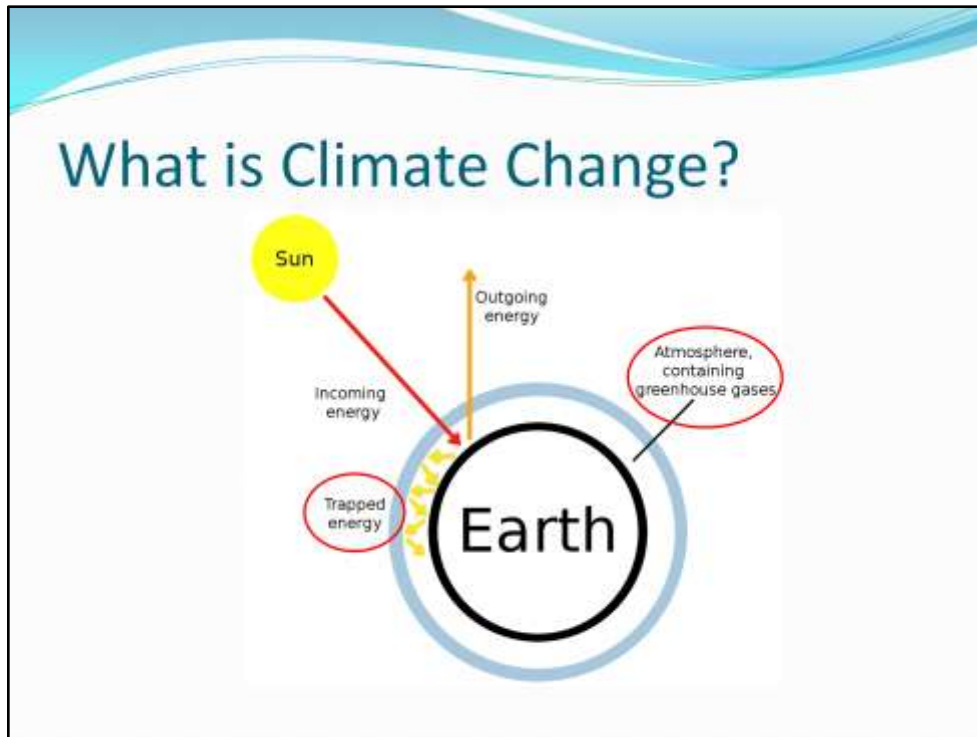
- Working definitions: climate change & justice
- Quick dive into ecological theology
- Climate change's impact on justice
- Individual & Structural Responses
- Small Groups activity



While justice & climate change are not new to us, there are many models and definitions out there, so I'd like to start off by sharing what we will mean when we talk about them today. Then we will take a quick dive into ecological theology before looking at climate justice and how we can act.

I want to mention now that I will pass out a handout that summarizes this presentation when we get to the group activity.

Without further ado-



Let's take a brief look at climate change. First of all, I'm trained in theology, not science. So this is a brief introduction to give our conversation some context. I encourage researching any questions you have on the climate science on your own. That being said - climate change is a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels. (wikipedia) The earth can sequester some of the additional carbon dioxide humans are emitting, but not all of it. What the earth doesn't sequester goes into the atmosphere and increases the amount of the sun's energy that gets trapped in the atmosphere. While the climate has changed before, this is different because in the past, a large event such as a volcanic eruption took place and both the temperature and green house gas levels changed together. Now the green house gas levels are rising first from human activity, and causing the rise in temperature to follow. So far the temperature has increased about 1 degree Celsius and continues to rise. To give some perspective, a drop of 1-2 degree Celsius was all it took to cause an ice age. Since this is a different kind of climate change, we have to rely on models to predict risks and the best responses. (work training) The models vary in their predictions, but the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in October of 2018 that we need to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid climate crisis, and that not rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15>)

Risks of Climate Change

- Less food
- Less energy
- Less money
- Less fresh water
- Less species
- More public health crises
- More severe weather events
- More displaced populations



The screen shows a sampling of the risks we are starting to see and will continue to see at greater impacts in the future until the green house gases and therefore the temperature are under control. There are models that say we will reach a tipping point and that past that point we will not be able to recover from climate crisis.

The October 2018 Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change Report, which many in the scientific field view as too conservative, states that Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' around 2050. The co-chair of the working group Debra Roberts said, "The next few years are probably the most important in our history." (<https://ipcc.ch/sr15/>)

So when people say that this is THE issue of our time, strong arguments can be made that they are correct.

With this as our working definition of climate change, let's move on to define justice.



Social Justice-for humans Ecological Justice- for all creation

- Right relationships
- Mutually beneficial relationships
- Relationships of reciprocity & care
- Dignity, needs, & gifts honored regardless of ability
- Preferential option for the poor

In my experience it is more common to hear about social justice-justice for humans- than ecological justice-justice for all creation. These two forms of justice are not mutually exclusive and today we will talk about justice to mean both. The justice we refer to is not an earned justice. It is what God intends for all of creation-right relationships that are mutually beneficial, that honor dignity, needs, and gifts regardless of ability. And we have a responsibility to judge our progress by how the poorest among us are doing. These phrases come from ecological theology and catholic social teaching and form our working definition of justice today.

Theological Reflection & Contemporary Theologies

- Tradition + Current Situation + Individual Experience
- New theology/interpretation for this time & place
- Examples: Ecological Theology, Liberation Theology, & Feminist Theology

Now that we've defined climate change & justice, we'll take a quick dive into ecological theology-because it is a quick dive, it will be a little simplified.

While there are some theologies that stay the same, like our belief in the trinity and the incarnation, other theologies change and develop over time. One process for these changing and developing theologies is theological reflection.

Theological reflection is a prayerful discernment process that takes the tradition and teachings of the church to date, the current situation, and individual experiences into consideration to make sure we are loving as Jesus would love in this time and this place.

Ecological theology is a contemporary theology that developed in light of the environmental crisis. It says, "Hey! We need to fix our relationships with the rest of creation. Climate change isn't what love looks like." Just like liberation theology says "Hey! We need to empower the poor; the civil wars in south and central America are not what love looks like." And feminist theology says, "Hey! We need to rediscover the voices of women in Christianity; patriarchy is not what love looks like."

Identify Interpretations that Harm

- Climate Change is God's will
- Extreme Individualism
- Linking material wealth with spiritual favor

Part of developing contemporary theologies is to look at aspects of past or present interpretations of the Christian faith that are no longer helpful, and perhaps even harmful. Ecological Theology asserts that Christianity has colluded with society in creating climate change, and needs to be careful not to continue this in the future.

Here are three examples harmful interpretations of Christianity in light of climate change:

Climate change is God' will, it shows the second coming is at hand, therefore we shouldn't try to stop it. Now maybe the second coming is at hand, but scripture tells us we will not know when the second coming arrives and that when it does arrive, we will be carrying out our lives – which means we will be carrying out works of justice.

We also want to be careful of a focus on individual salvation without the context of the larger cosmic salvation. Some interpretations of Christianity focus so much on personal salvation that they turn a blind eye to our interconnectedness & working for justice.

It is also important to be careful of linking material abundance with spiritual favor. This can tie into the myth of unlimited economic growth, instead of looking at the health of relationships across creation.



New theologies also rediscover and create interpretations of Christianity that will help right the identified wrong.

Ecological theology works with science to show our place in creation. This calendar condenses sciences understanding of creation into a one calendar year.

It is useful to ecological theology because it shows that humans have only been on the scene for the equivalent of 6 minutes. Rather than destroy the creation that was already at home here, as the self reflective part of creation, we have the responsibility to help it flourish.

Christianity isn't anthropocentric

“You gave the world into our care that we might be your faithful stewards and show forth your bountiful grace.

But we failed to honor your image in one another and in ourselves; we would not see your goodness in the world around us; and so we violated your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love.”

Excerpt from Enriching Our Worship 1 Eucharistic Prayer

Our faith tradition upholds that responsibility. Christianity isn't anthropocentric. Even if you've never heard it said this way before, Christianity isn't all about us humans.

We have all heard this message in the Enriching Our Worship 1 Eucharistic Prayer where we so clearly acknowledge that we have violated creation.

When I hear it prayed, it is clear that the rest of creation has its own inherent dignity. How could we violate creation if its only worth is for us to subdue it?

Scripture & Creation's Dignity

- Genesis Creation Story
 - God finds the whole of creation "very good."
- Genesis the Great Flood
 - only after the great flood does God allow humans & animals to eat meat
- Isaiah Chapter 11
 - on the holy mountain, ruthless & wicked people are punished
 - animals we consider violent are made peaceful to play with children and eat grass.
- Romans 8:18-27
 - speaks of the salvation of all creation

This view is in scripture, too. In Genesis during creation, each part of creation is named "good" yet it is not until the whole of creation is complete that God named it "very good."

Also, according to biblical accounts, before the great flood, neither humans or animals ate meat. This shows that human sin is responsible for the loss of right relationship with animals and among animals.

Finally, both Isaiah Chapter 11 and Romans Chapter 8 include all of creation in their accounts of salvation.

Looking at these few scripture references we see that God loves all of creation for its own worth and includes creation in salvation. This means that our work to bring forth the kingdom, includes justice for all creation.

Building Blocks of Eco-Theology



- Awareness of interconnectedness
- Awareness of the inherent dignity of creation
- Hope in our incarnate God
- Creativity in redefining an abundant life

As we wrap up our quick dive into ecological theology, here are a few ways of thinking you can foster if you want to incorporate ecological theology in your lives–

First, we are interconnected; think of the butterfly or ripple effect. I like to think of the Paschal Mystery and the life, death, life cycle that Jesus experience and is present in so much of the natural world.

Second, God found the whole of creation very good, and it has inherent dignity.

Third, we have hope because God is incarnate, present to us and giving us what we need.

Fourth, the social idea of abundance is at the end of its viability-we could never make more at less cost, and we can't keep ignoring the costs of our way of life. The book that started my study of ecological theology was by a Lutheran theologian Sallie McFague. It is called *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*. One of the main focuses is on redefining abundance. Two aspects of this task are 1. regularly changing our perspectives so we have a fuller picture and 2. learning from the wild spaces in our lives. She defines wild spaces as those aspects of our lives where we have never lived according to the societal norms. These are important because they teach us that things can be different. We can create new ways of being as communities that will bring about the flourishing of all creation.

Now that we have defined climate change and justice and taken a quick dive into ecological theology, we will turn our focus to injustice caused by climate change.

Climate Change & Injustice

- The consequences are not proportional to causation
- A new wave of migrants-people and animals
- Extinction of plants and animals
- Our children & future generations without basic needs
- Struggle for access increases

The consequences of climate change are not proportional to causation. We can easily see this locally- property is less expensive near landfills, flood zones, and train tracks-locations that will be most impacted by increased air pollution and flooding. Leaving those who are economically poorer to suffer more than those who can afford property in less compromised locations.

Globally, populations that have never emitted fossil fuels at the level of the US and other “developed” countries are still facing the consequences of climate change-sometimes to more severe extents than we have seen yet. One example is Kiribati – a small nation of islands in the pacific. While its people have always lived off of the grid and in harmony with their land, climate change is causing their islands to sink. Their nation is being proactive and has purchased land in Fiji for its people. Moving there is not required, but it does give them an option for a new home as they must migrate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/01/kiribati-climate-change-fiji-vanua-levu>

The International Organization for Migration estimates that there will be anywhere between 150 million and 1 billion climate migrants by 2050. The animals are also changing their migration patterns in response to the changing climate. The coral reefs and countless other plants and animals are going extinct, yet they did nothing to create the problem.

We greatly risk leaving current children and future generations without access to basic needs. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification estimates 30% of the population will lack access to water by 2030. If that happens, and we are still in a system where money and material possessions hold power, it will be the poor who are the most affected.

How will we create justice in this time of climate change?

- Cooperate as a global community
- Measure community well being instead of just financial growth
- Implement lifestyle changes
- Validate self care in the face of so much loss and change



This is a grim picture of injustice, and it is even more grim because it is either here or estimated to arrive in the next ten to thirty years. This is where we are blessed to have our faith-not because we can say what happens on this side of things doesn't matter, but because we do not have to lose hope. We can trust that our incarnate God is present and gives us what we need to work together and bring forth the kingdom of justice. So much is needed to do that, I've highlighted just a few items on this slide. There is a danger that nations and communities will become insular and try to only save their own. Now more than ever, we need community on all levels. We also need to go back to Sallie McFague's wild spaces and be willing to make structural and lifestyle changes that redefine abundance. Finally, we cannot become deer in headlights. We must do the work of self care, so that we can continue this most important work of climate justice.

Ways to Act-Individually

- **The biggest impact**

- Family planning
- Live car free
- Take one less transatlantic flight
- Buy green energy
- Buy a more efficient car
- Eat a plant based diet

(Wynes & Nicholas *Environmental Research Letters*, 2017)

- **Still important**

- Pray Daily
- Compost/Buy local food
- Recycle
- Wash clothes in cold water
- Hang clothes to dry
- Switch to LED lighting
- Cut back on plastic
- Buy less stuff

Next let's look at individual lifestyle changes we can make to address climate change. You may have seen this biggest impact list from Wynes & Nicholas before.

I'm certainly not saying that everyone of these is right for every person. The lifestyle changes you make are ones that need to be discerned-and not just discerned on your own- discerned with our God who knows the impact our individual actions have on the whole of creation, with our communities who can broaden our perspectives, and yes with ourselves who are aware of the uniqueness of our own situations.

While continuously implementing new individual lifestyle changes is important, individual actions are not enough.

The Evil Done On Our Behalf

- It is not enough to make lifestyle changes
- It is essential to address the systems that are at work in climate change
- That means:
 - Educating ourselves on systems, how they are changing, options for adaptation, and their interconnectedness
 - Collaborating with other stakeholders & those in positions of power

This phrase we pray on Sunday always jumps out at me “the evil done on our behalf.”

If we pray for repentance of the evil done on our behalf, what are we doing to stop it from happening in the first place?

I admit, addressing the underlying systems that make up structures of injustice is complicated.

It means knowing what the systems are, how they function, options for making them just, the steps to take to get there, the unintended consequences because they connect to other systems, etc..

Of course this work takes a community. It requires collaborating with other stakeholders and those in positions of power who may not share all of our values.

Know Your Audience's Values

- How will you influence behavior when justice &/or climate change aren't valued?
- An effective way to influence behavior is to show how it connects to an existing value



Values are huge motivators to change behavior. But what happens when you are working with a group that you can't talk to about faith and justice?

Find common values that you do share, and with the list of climate change risks, it shouldn't be too hard.

Certainly everyone values having enough food and water and less public health crises and less severe weather events.

Ways to Act for Structural Change

- Government
 - Elected officials
 - Youth Strikes
- Corporations
 - Contact &/or Boycott
- Organizations



There are multiple levels to engage with on the path to structural change. You can address the government through elected officials (support making a livable environment a constitutional right-<https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/juliana-v-us>) or strikes (watch here for next youth climate strike date-<https://www.cyaca.org/>).

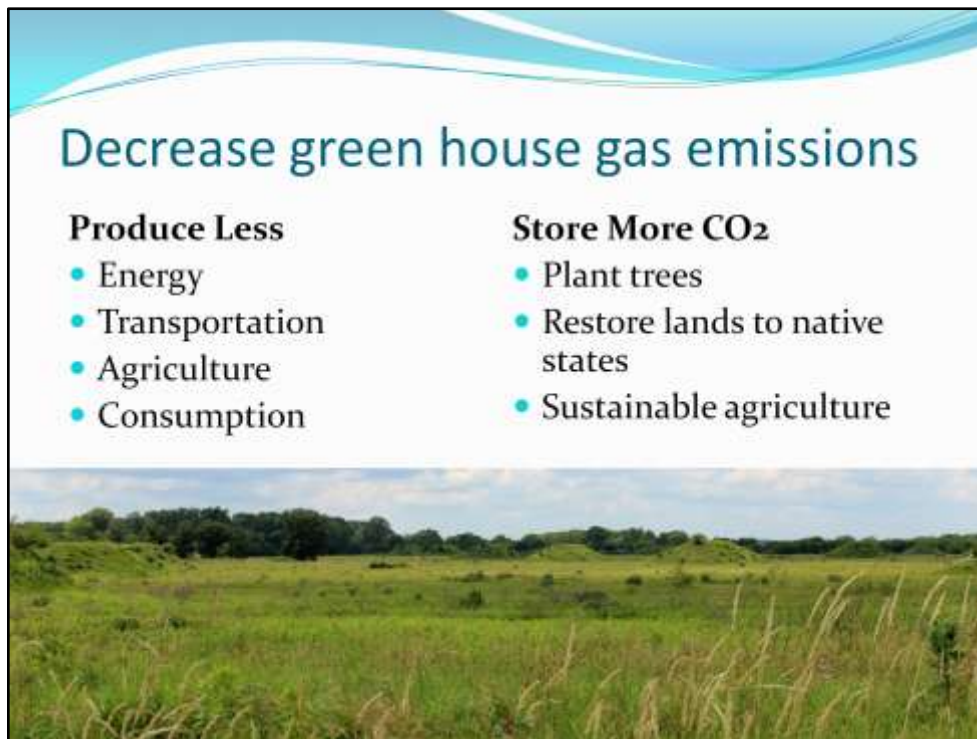
You can find the list of the top 100 companies causing climate change, and contact their leaders and/or boycott their products.
https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2019/04/27/names-and-locations-of-the-top-100-people-killing-the-planet/?fbclid=IwAR018zCT6uKEJNfL4qol8GojiOiBdL_GiPusWNtTPnIMmrLobJ8cQQEtuyk

You can join an existing organization

- For high school students: The Chicago Youth Alliance for Climate Action
<https://www.cyaca.org/>
- Chicago Area Peace Action-Climate Campaign <http://chipeaceaction.org/climate-change/>

You could engage with the church

- You could explore starting a climate change working group at SPR
- Get involved with the 15 environmental resolutions passed at the 2018 Episcopal General Convention.
- Or maybe there are opportunities at the diocesan level



We need structural changes that address the causes of climate change as well as those that address the consequences of climate change. Here are some examples to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- We can shift to 100% renewable energy sources
- We can invest in high speed rail and rethink communities and lifestyles so walking & biking are the main forms of transportation
- We can grow food so that we are working with natural systems and enriching the land, as well as sequestering carbon by having crops planted year round
- We can plant more trees and restore land to its native state to assist with sequestering carbon dioxide.



Questions and/or
thoughts to share?

We've covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time-defined climate change & just, took a quick dive into ecological theology, looked at climate injustice and ways to address it.

Before breaking into small groups, does anyone have any questions or thoughts they would like to share?

Small Groups

- Pick a type of group to join:
 - Individual Action Group
 - Discern through conversation at least one individual action you can take to address climate change
 - Structural Action Group
 - Discern through conversation at least one structural action you can take as a group to address climate change

The first youth group tshirt I had, said something to this effect on it Faith is a Verb, It Requires Action. Theologian Bernard Lonergan teaches that conversion is not complete without action. I would say Jesus teaches that too-you shall know a tree by its fruits. We are empowered to be co-creators.

Whether you have a justice issue you dedicate your energy to or taking action toward justice isn't really your thing, I invite you to participate in our small groups activity and commit to an action on this justice issue. Maybe there is a small lifestyle change you can make. Or maybe you would feel comfortable joining with a few other parishioners to commit to structural action.

I would love for us to have at least one small group committed to structural action. Raise your hand if you would like to join a structural small group (based on the number get them situated, then ask the rest of the room to break into tables of 3-5 people to work on their individual activities)

Small Groups Outcome

- For each individual or structural action committed to:
 - Write down the action & the name & email address for the person making sure it is carried out
- We will touch base in one month to see the progress & share with the group

Small Groups Sharing

- Which group: individual or structural
- Action(s) agreed upon
- Turn in sheet with action(s) and contact info

Thank You

- Take home a handout
- Follow up on commitments in a month
- Borrow a book if you'd like