



First Presbyterian Church

Albany, New York

# REFLECTIONS

a photo-essay journal



Autumn 2017  
This issue features reflections on  
"For the Beauty of the Earth"



RG

## **“For the Beauty of the Earth”**

Hymn by Foliott S. Pierpoint, 1864

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the glory of the skies,  
For the Love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies:  
Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of Praise.

Born at Spa Villa, Bath, England, Pierpoint was educated at Queens' College, Cambridge. He was a classics schoolmaster and taught at Somersetshire College, spending most of his life in Bath and the south-west.

Pierpoint was 29 at the time he wrote this hymn, mesmerized by the beauty of the countryside that surrounded him. It first appeared in 1864 in a book of Eucharistic Hymns and Poems.

Pierpoint died in 1917, at the age of 82.



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## The stewardship of keeping and healing creation

By Tara Lindsley

A “steward” is someone who is responsible for the care of something that belongs to someone else. As Christians, we learn that; “*The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*” [Psalm 24:1] So, good stewardship means to manage wisely all our God-given blessings; our money, property, talents and time.

What do you think of when you think about stewardship at First Pres? Hopefully, you don’t associate stewardship with fundraising, pledge cards, church budgets and building repairs! Maybe you think about those Stewardship Sunday readings of Jesus’ Parable of the Talents [Matthew 25:14-30], which reminds us that we are responsible to God for how well we have managed all the gifts God has entrusted to us. Perhaps you recall our Consecration Sunday last fall, when as part of worship we reflected on the spiritual discipline of financial giving to God’s work through this congregation. Maybe you remember, as I do, the joyful, musical procession we made together to bring our Estimate of Giving cards to the offering plate and the fellowship of a celebratory meal!

According to Herb Miller, author of *New Consecration Sunday*, God made each of us with a different set of gifts, but we are all equally called to be stewards. He challenges us to understand that “stewardship is not something we do, it is who we are.” He points out that scripture teaches that people who take stewardship of God’s gifts seriously have these characteristics: “They give through the church [Malachi 3:10], liberally [Luke 6:38], sacrificially [2 Corinthians 8:14], cheerfully [2 Corinthians 9:7], and regularly [1 Corinthians 16:2]. He proposes that this applies both to giving money and to giving time and talents; adding that it is an inappropriate spiritual decision to give time instead of money, or money instead of time.

Another term that appears frequently in the bible and relates to stewardship is “tithing”, or giving of a “tenth” (the meaning of “tithe”) of one’s earnings. But, the spiritual discipline of giving is more important than the dollar amount. This is illustrated by Jesus’ comment that a woman who gave a very small amount had given more than those who gave large amounts because “while they gave out of their abundance, she gave all she had to live on.” [Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4].

The idea that stewardship is fundamentally about caring for the Earth itself and all its magnificent and abundant life is suggested in Genesis 2:15, “*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*” God gave human

beings “*dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals of the land*” [Gen 1:1–2:4], but not to exploit it for profit or pleasure. Indeed, the Hebrew word for *dominion* does not mean “to dominate.” It means the same thing as stewardship, “to take responsibility for,” as a capable caretaker would. What more awesome responsibility can we humans be given than to take care of, well, everything?

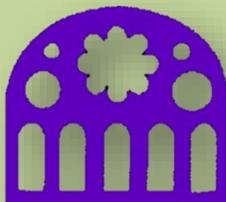
All around us are signs that we humans have not been good stewards of the earth. Earth’s resources are viewed merely as commodities to be bought and sold for profit, often at the expense of workers’ health and safety. Depletion of the ozone layer by fossil fuels, deforestation and other man-made insults to the planet have led to a global climate crisis. Overpopulation, air and water pollution, and extreme weather all affect the most vulnerable people the most, with terrible implications for poverty, homelessness, hunger, and war around the world. As Christians, what is our responsibility?

David Rhoades writes in his blog, *Stewardship of Creation*, about “environmental tithing”. He claims that we should also apply the tithe to the stewardship of our personal resources of Earth. He asks, “Can we reduce our electrical use by ten percent? Can we reduce the gas for heating by ten percent? Can we reduce the water we use by ten percent? Can we eat ten percent less food that comes from a distance? Can we eat fewer meals with meat? Can we travel ten percent less than usual? Can we invest a tenth of our financial resources in funds that contribute to sustainability? Can we set other goals to reduce our impact on the environment by a tenth—or more? And if we can, could we then contribute the money saved toward further efforts at restoring Earth?”

In the coming weeks, we will all be called to give. I ask you, I challenge you, to think differently this year. Think of personal and financial increases in “tenths”...tenths of time, tenths of money, tenths of natural resources saved. Even think about additional tenths of time this year you will spend in prayer. My family and I will be giving differently this year and I ask you to



Continued on p. 6 **Stewardship.**



**First Presbyterian  
Church  
Albany, NY**  
Founded in 1763

**Dr. Miriam Lawrence  
Leupold**

**Dr. Glenn D. Leupold**  
Co-Pastors

**Dr. Michael Lister**  
Director of Music

**Trevor Kahlbaugh**  
Organist

**Christy D'Ambrosio**  
Youth Director

**Robert C. Lamar**  
Pastor Emeritus

#### Elders

Keith Barber  
Carol Bullard  
Gladys Crowder  
David Hannay  
Lee Helsby  
Annette Johnson  
Tara Lindsley  
John Myers  
Phillip Riddle  
Mary Rogers  
Roseline Takor

#### Deacons

**Bob Willower**  
Moderator

Mirabelle Beck  
Diane Cornell  
Prudence Iyok  
Ellen Kemp  
Peter Kimuli  
Judith Mark  
Yousaf Mathias  
Jerry Nathan  
Ron Pettis  
Kirsten Pruzek  
Teboh Raphael  
Leslie Roccario  
Peg Schalit  
Gail Scott  
Deb Shoup  
Grace White  
Barbara Woodruff  
Margaret Zettle

## If you make a mess, clean it up “This is My Father’s World”

By Richard Gascoyne

My Sunday School teacher told us the story of Maltbie D. Babcock, a former minister of our church in Lockport, NY, and the author of the hymn, “This is my Father’s World.” He was inspired by his walks in our town along the Niagara escarpment, the geographic feature that created Niagara Falls, twenty miles away. I was fascinated when she explained that the cliff over at Outwater Park, my first playground with swings and slides and teeter-totters, was formed when the ice melted from the last ICE AGE. Wow! How long ago was that? In fact, she said, the Great Lakes are a part of the meltdown of that ice.

On a clear day you can see Lake Ontario, fourteen miles away, from the bluff at Outwater Park. That’s what they say, but I have to admit that I’ve never really been sure that I could differentiate the blue of the sky from the blue of the lake. But the view is breath-taking! And it becomes magnified each time I sing the hymn.

That was my Sunday School introduction to “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth ...” Apparently my Sunday School teacher didn’t have a problem reconciling science with the bible. Neither did I, until I began to think, what made that ice melt to create an environment of such beauty today, one that could sustain life as we know it: “rocks and trees ... skies and seas; his hands the wonders wrought?”

Global warming? Is that what happened? Well, apparently it is. And not just one global warming but several ice ages and meltings over a number of years too large for me to comprehend and a number much, much larger than bible literalists calculate. Hm. Apparently we can effectuate change faster than God can. But isn’t that all part of God’s plan?

Some seventy years after that Sunday School lesson, I asked my son, the scientist, a Global Research guy whose field is chemistry and who has been part of GE’s environmental controversies, and a Christian by cultural tradition and in practice, what his thoughts were on the science-religion-politics surrounding the issue. “I don’t understand,” he said, “the need to rationalize and intellectualize how we should treat the world and each other.” It’s not about science, it’s not about a literal interpretation of the bible, and it’s not about politics. It’s about what we learned as kids: If you make a mess, clean it up; share; play fair; don’t hit people; don’t take things that aren’t yours; put things back where you found them. [Thanks for pointing this out to him, Robert Fulghum, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.] God’s word is poetry; God’s world is science. And, God’s word and world is: if you make a mess, clean it up; share; play fair! Why doesn’t everyone get it?

Each time we get a new hymnal (and it has happened twice in my time on the Worship Committee at First Pres) I check to see if “This is my Father’s World” has made the gender cut. It has each time. Apparently I’m not the only one who has been inspired by Babcock’s “This is my Father’s World.” Ken Burns used it in his documentary, *The National Parks*, and it was used in the film version of *Lord of the Rings*. This is my Father’s world, and this is the world my son is inheriting from his father. If you make a mess, clean it up!

## Keeping and healing creation

### The banner

By David Wood, Church Historian



At the time of the redecoration of the sanctuary in the early 1990s, several decorative elements of the original design of the space were either restored or reproduced. Among

those was the reproduction of the stenciling around the room, and, most obviously, removal of the mid-20th century lighting fixtures and installation of the present chandeliers, which resemble the original gas fixtures.

In the same time period, the use of banners by other FOCUS churches came into use. These portable banners were brought into the sanctuaries during the processions of FOCUS joint services. In the early 1990s, the Peacemaking Committee of FPC decided



that banners should be hung in the Sanctuary. The process that led to the construction of the banner is best summarized by the remarks made by Elder Sara Scotchmer at the dedication of the banner on April 26, 1992 (also reproduced on page 152 of the Session Minutes for 1992).

"When someone suggested many months ago, 'Let's make a banner for worship!' what came to our minds was rather conventional: nothing like what we dedicate today. What evolved out of that beginning was a project which would both celebrate life and also remind us of the urgent task of making peace: both the healing and keeping of natural creation and the making of peace with all humankind. The banner being hung today focuses on the natural creation, and a second one (to be hung in the corresponding left-arch) will focus on healing and celebrating human relationships.

"Designing the banner involved several challenging dimensions: for example, the architectural space of the sanctuary, an appropriate style, the particular

character of our worship events, the interest and skills of persons who might help with the project. We finally chose to express a contemporary theme in the contemporary style. The design, we hoped, would echo the arches and stained glass of the sanctuary, but be created in textile. Here was another challenge, one that led to the discovery of the lightness of parachute nylon and textile paints and stains.



"Of the thousands of ways of representing creation, we could include only a few. Among them are wild beasts; the exotic quetzal bird of Guatemalan rainforests; snakes, opossums and owls; the kudu of Africa; the Native American three sisters (corn, bean and squash); the Iroquois symbol of creation (pine tree and turtle); the whale and

dolphin; the eastern symbol of balance and harmony (yin and yang); a sunrise.

"The process was truly a group one, intergenerational, and the effort of many creative souls and willing hands; it could not have been planned nor finished by one person alone; mistakes evolved into creative solutions; certainly it represents many hours of tedious but joyful work. So it is with keeping and tending the earth: we must all participate! And so also it is with the church: we all have something to contribute to the life and love of the community.

"Many people contributed to the creation of this banner. The Peacemaking Committee gave it their blessing and held us accountable. The family of Donald Eaton entrusted us with a gift from the Memorial Fund to cover cost of materials. The children of the Sunday School graciously contributed their creations of birds and bugs, fishes and flowers (many were incorporated into the banner; others are part of worship today). Early planning discussions and deliberation included Irene Jackson, Audry Camacho, Kimberly Hardt, Tom Littlefield, Gailey McIntyre, Mark Kenyon, Nancy Johnson, Harriet Seeley, and Sara Scotchmer. When construction began, others joined in: Beth Poore-Bowman, Doris Fry, Mar Chesney, Nancy Vail, Susan Easton, Judy Mark, Bernie Hillengas, Sheryl Sheraw, Jennifer Walker, Sherry Hall. The construction was also

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blessed in the patient and loving spirits of baby Abigail Bowman, Mimi Scotchmer, and Bob Jackson. We thank everyone who gave a piece of themselves in some way, and together we dedicate and celebrate.”

The legend at the lower left of the banner reads, “Remembering Donald R. Eaton, 1908 – 1990.” Mr. Eaton and his wife Mary Jane joined our congregation in 1946. Both were members until their deaths, and both were officers of the church for many years. Their daughter Marian and grandson Luke are current members of our congregation.

The worship service on the morning of the dedication included the hymns “All Creatures of Our God and King” and “For the Beauty of the Earth.” The Anthem



was “The Sixth Day” (from *The Creation*) by F. J. Haydn, sung by William Kirk, bass-baritone, accompanied by Gareth Griffiths, guest organist. Pastor Robert C. Lamar’s sermon was also entitled “Keeping and

Healing Creation.” The worship service concluded with a performance of “Finale Jubilante” by Healey Willan, performed by Nancy Frank, Organist.

The worship bulletin for the day included the CALL TO RESTORE THE CREATION, which concludes as follows:

“The 202nd General Assembly (1990) believes God calls the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to engage in the tasks of restoring creation in the ‘turnaround decade’ now beginning and for as long as God continues to call people of faith to undertake these tasks.”

The next time you are in the sanctuary, take a good look at the banner and reflect on its message.



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Continued from **Stewardship**, p. 5.

join us with your own extraordinary gifts. We will give and do more because of God’s blessings and we will give because of our deep respect and love for the community here at First Pres. I will pray 10 times as hard and 10 times as often for all of us to partner together to make this a very special stewardship year of “tenths.”

References cited:

Herb Miller. *New Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program*. 2007. Abingdon Press.

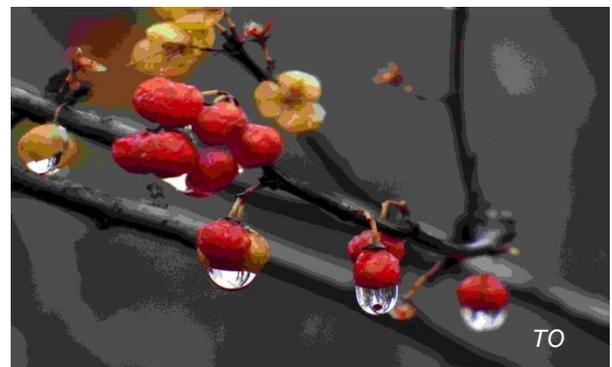
David Rhoades. *Stewardship of Creation*. <http://www.webofcreation.org/archive-of-resources/505-stewardship-of-creation>, Accessed 7-29-17



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TO

## Climate change: the great moral issue of our time

By Kendra Smith-Howard

*Editor's note: Kendra Smith-Howard, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of History at the University at Albany, whose focus is on environmental history in the 20th Century, U.S.*

The climate is warming. Increasingly, climate change is not simply a matter of theoretical debate but a problem whose effects are felt by ordinary people. Heat waves endanger the lives of the most vulnerable, torrents of rain flood streets and send sewage into the Hudson River, or bodies weaken—inflicted with insect-borne diseases like lyme or zika virus.

Often, it can seem as if everything is stacked against us in fighting to protect the ecological integrity of our natural world. Since the sources of carbon emissions are so much woven into the patterns of our lives, it is difficult to imagine a new way forward. It's easier to rally the troops around a lost bird sanctuary or polluted river than maps of hypothetical sea-level rise.

Rarely, if ever, have things looked so bleak on a national level for climate legislation. Despite long-standing knowledge of the effects of a warming world, fossil fuel executives have cast doubt on the science surrounding climate change by funding pro-carbon alternative realities. Once understood as a bipartisan concern, climate denial now grips much of the Republican Party and certainly the Presidential administration. As you know, President Trump pulled the United States out of the most recent global climate agreement—the Paris Accord—in early June.

Why should First Presbyterian Church members care about addressing this problem?

And if they did care, could anything they do even make a dent?

I had more to say on this issue than I imagined when invited to author this piece. So you'll get my thoughts in a two-part series. This version seeks to address the questions: Why should First Presbyterians care about climate change? How can I, as a citizen activist, get started? Next issue, you'll read some brainstorming about how we, as a congregation, could take concrete, simple steps on this issue.



### Why should First Presbyterian Church care about climate change?

First, if we are committed as a church to bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, a meaningful way to do it is to consume less carbon. The United States, with its big houses and expansive oil-dependent lifestyle has contributed the most to the problem of climate change. The United States has now been surpassed in its carbon emissions by China, but still, the United States disproportionately pollutes per capita. Whereas Americans emit 16.2 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person per year, in China, that number is less than half, at 7.5, and in India, just 1.7. Further, many of the world's poorest nations will see the biggest effects from a changing climate—with rising seas, less reliable harvests, and warming temperatures. Within the U.S., minority communities and poor communities are on the frontlines of the effects of climate change.

As Christians, we must recognize our common humanity, and the dignity and suffering of all. As Pope Benedict put it in his 2015 encyclical, "We have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*" Acting in ways that limit our carbon footprint, we put ourselves in solidarity with those we have aggrieved.

Second, our resource-heavy, carbon-centric ways separate us

from one another, and from God. Insofar as encountering God's creation is a way of knowing and understanding the mysteries and magnificence of the Holy Spirit, so also do works that tarnish our planet show a lack of gratitude and care for that which God has given us. When we engage in less-carbon heavy practices—like walking, or sitting on the stoop or porch, we interact with the world and see our neighbors—far more than when sealed in our air-conditioned cars or houses. Further, our consumerist ways can drive us not simply to use resources needlessly, but channel our time and attention to serving ourselves, and not aiding or loving those around us.

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So, what can we do, as citizens and Christians in a nation that seems hell-bent on ignoring rather than acknowledging its contributions to climate change?

**Given the national scene, we can begin by shifting focus to the state and local levels.**

**1. Pass the Climate and Community Protection Act for NY State**

States can lead the way in reducing our carbon footprint. That’s why, on Tuesday, June 6, I spent the day lobbying on behalf of a bill called the Climate and Community Protection Act (S 6617). The bill urges NY to limit its carbon consumption in increments, up to 2050. While Governor Cuomo has urged these same sorts of cutbacks in carbon, his executive statements may or may not come to fruition should another governor be elected. Further, the legislation directs funds to job creation in the green energy sector and requires that renewable energy workers be paid a fair wage. It particularly aims to target underserved communities and/or communities that will have to transition away from carbon-heavy industry. That’s why the bill has the support of unions, civil rights leaders, and environmental groups alike. This is an environmental justice, not just a climate bill, and is unique and important in that way. (More here: <https://www.nyrenews.org/>)

After a rally, we broke into groups to speak with state Senators. My group included two citizens mobilized by their faith community (Schenectady Unitarian), one from PAUSE, and two from Citizen Action. Research has shown that explaining how climate change will affect people and places they care about makes it more likely that people will be invested in this issue. So I couldn’t help feeling that I’d be a better advocate if I knew more about

the particular effects of climate change on different parts of New York State—I have a sense of its effects here in the capital district (see this wonderful essay for more:

<https://www.thenation.com/article/low-water-mark/>), but I hope to have a chance to learn more about the districts of the Senators outside of the region with whom I meet when I lobby next time. Researching these effects – perhaps reaching out to get testimony from congregations in areas most affected, might help us make the case.

In June 2017, the bill passed the Assembly by a 95-40 majority. It also passed the Assembly in 2016, with bipartisan sponsors. Both years, the bill has been stymied in the state Senate because it gets stuck in the rules committee and never reaches the floor to be voted upon. Thus, lobbying for the legislation has been a bit of a frustrating introduction to state politics, but I’ll be back next session to push for its passage. Care to join?

**2. Put climate concerns on the agenda, locally**

Why not make environmental and climate change issues front-and-center in the 2017 Albany Mayoral contest, city council, and local elections around the region? Show up, ask questions, and hold leaders accountable for their promises.

My heart aches about many issues right now, and I understand if climate change has sunk in your priorities in the past months. But keep in mind that this issue is not separable from those of poverty, or health care, or racial justice—but simply another arena in which to fight on behalf of the vulnerable, for climate change and the fate of the world’s people are intimately linked.

*Editor’s note: Stay tuned for further developments and for Part II of “Climate Change: the great moral issue of our time” in the winter issue of REFLECTIONS. Meanwhile, become involved by attending the Albany Mayoral Forum, listed below.*



TO

**Albany Mayoral Forum:  
Environmental and Health  
Protections**

When: **Thursday, Sept 7, 2017** - 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Where: Unitarian Universalist Church  
405 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206

Cost: **FREE ADMISSION**

## Beauty, the Great Spirit, and the Native American

# “One Mother and one Father. And I saw that it was holy”

By Michael Attwell

Dr. Paul Harrison, in his book entitled *Elements of Pantheism (a Spirituality of Nature and the Universe)* offers that religious beliefs varied among Native American tribes, but there was a widespread belief in a Great Spirit who created the earth, and who pervaded everything. Harrison describes the Native American perspective as “linked to an animism which saw kindred spirits in all animals and plants”.

Indeed, one of my most striking memories as a young British-born teenager transplanted to America is the crying Native American in the “Keep America Beautiful” environmental public service announcements in the early 1970s, who shed a tear after trash was thrown from the window of a car and it lands at his feet. The voice-over says “People start pollution; people can stop it.”

I’ve unabashedly had a lifelong love affair with all things Native American and have been an ardent believer in Native American spirituality tied to the beauty and hallowedness of our natural environment, despite naysayer anthropologists who conclude that this spirituality is part truth and part myth. I prefer to hold onto my “myth” because evidence in the form of Native American prayers and proverbs clearly demonstrate that “the beauty of the earth” is certainly a transcending theme in Native American thinking, and I would like it to be so in mine. Besides, myths can be fruitful even if they are partly based on truth and partly based on dreams, and where would we be if we didn’t have dreams and the hope for a better world for ourselves and our children, and theirs?

I have no pretense to scholarly mastery on the subject of Native American spirituality, but I know what resonates with me, and the beauty of the Earth, as seen through their eyes and words, is spell-binding. So let’s go (without additional commentary) to the source of their spiritual waters, which offers wisdom, solace, serenity and hope:

*“When a man does a piece of work which is admired by all we say that it is wonderful; but when we see the changes of day and night, the sun, the moon, and the stars in the sky, and the changing seasons upon the earth, with their ripening fruits, anyone must realize that it is the work of someone more powerful than man.”* —Chased-by-Bears, Santee-Yanktonai Sioux (Minnesota)



*“Only to the white man was nature a wilderness and only to him was the land ‘infested’ with ‘wild’ animals and ‘savage’ people. To us it was tame, Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery.”* Black Elk, Oglala Lakota Sioux (Dakotas)

*“The Great Spirit is in all things: he is in the air we breathe. The Great Spirit is our Father, but the Earth is our Mother. She nourishes us; that which we put into the ground she returns to us.”* Big Thunder, Wabanaki Algonquin (Maine and Canada)

*“I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell, and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the Spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one Being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all children of one Mother and one Father. And I saw that it was holy.”* Black Elk, Oglala Lakota Sioux (Dakotas)

*“The beauty of the trees, the softness of the air, the fragrance of the grass, they speak to me. The summit of the mountain, the thunder of the sky, the rhythm of the sea, speaks to me. The faintness of the stars, the freshness of the morning, the dewdrop on the flower, speaks to me. The strength of the fire, the taste of the salmon, the trail of the sun, and the life that never goes away, they speak to me. And my heart soars”.* Chief Dan George, Tsleil-Waututh (British Columbia)

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## Drowning but not dead ...

### NEW YORK 2140, by Kim Stanley Robinson

Review by Katherine Henrikson

*Editor's note – Katherine Henrikson, Ph.D., is retired from the Wadsworth Center, NYS Dept. of Health and the Department of Biochemistry, Albany Medical College.*

The signs of global warning that were mere predictions in the early 1980s, when I started to follow the findings, have largely come about in the last 30 years. To imagine what the world will look like 125 years from now is the province of science fiction. This book asks, if sea level were to rise 50 feet, what would be the consequences for the City of New York, for Manhattan? How would people live? How would they get around town? What would the weather be like? How much of the city would be under water?

Current predictions are for sea level to rise about 10 feet by the end of this century, so the author's fifty foot rise is clearly an exaggeration. But there are still interesting questions to look at regarding daily life. How do buildings survive when their first three floors are underwater? How can they be adapted to the new circumstances? What kind of transportation systems are there? Where does food come from? Is there a housing shortage? Are there new materials and energy sources that mitigate the difficulties?

There are references to the First Pulse and the Second Pulse, which were ten year periods when sea level rose dramatically. The subsequent masses of refugees, famine from crop failures, and social unrest are history in the time the book describes; social unrest is greatly reduced by 2140.

The new low tide level is at 30<sup>th</sup> Street, and high tide is at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Lower Manhattan is known as SuperVenice. In that area, there are no streets, only canals, with many small personal water craft and bus-like boats called vaporetos, in the Venetian tradition. Buildings are also connected by walkways called skybridges, built around the 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> floors, that allow people to walk above the watery surface.

The story centers around people living in a condominium building on Madison Square, at Fifth

## Is this my Father's world?

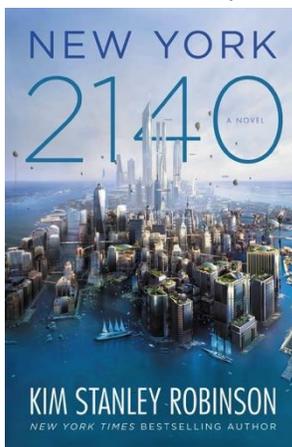
Avenue, Broadway, and Madison Avenue. It's a building (that actually exists) with a firm foundation: it was built in 1928 and was meant to be 100 stories high, but was topped off at 40 stories during the Depression. The foundation is very solid and the building is built on bedrock. Its basement and first three floors are under water, the dock and boat launch are on the former third and fourth floors.

The apartment superintendent's job is far more complicated than it is today. The building is fully wired with sensors to set off alarms if anything goes awry. If a submerged floor begins to have some dampness, the super must don scuba gear to inspect the outside of the building for leaks and repair them. And then spray himself with bleach on return to prevent infection from the dirty water. The building's tenants cooperate on The Farm, on the 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> floors, to raise most of their food, which is served in a common dining room on a low floor. Those who want to eat meat, must take care of the animals to earn their meals.

There are new materials that are vital to daily living. Very light weight, strong, flexible, waterproof fabric is wrapped around buildings below the water level to keep the foundations dry. Solar panels have turned into flexible solar fabric that can be used to power various types of transportation.

Much of present day Manhattan is built on land fill, and as the water level rises, the tides sweep the fill out to sea and undermine the buildings, which in 2140 frequently fall down. There is a serious housing shortage and people live in condemned buildings, alert to the sounds and movements that indicate an imminent collapse. A further complication is the federal rule that land between high-tide and low is public. So buildings between 30<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> streets are intertidal – one may own the building, but not the land it is built on.

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No fossil fuels are in use, all power comes from solar panels. There are no airplanes; the few people who travel do so by blimp, where the fabric skin of the blimp contains solar panels that generate the electricity to power the craft. There are ships that look like sailing ships, with solar panels in place of sails, that are used to transport cargo. The subways, of course, are gone underwater.

Though the social unrest is at a minimum, there is sufficient social disintegration that two of the characters in the story are nine and twelve year old boys who have raised themselves, living on the streets or canals. In the course of the novel they are given a copy of *Huckleberry Finn*, and a recording of it – with instructions to follow along in print as the audio plays until they can read the words.

*New York 2140* has quite an engaging story line to go along with the imaginings of the future. The plot follows the activities of six characters living very different lives in the condo building. While the book is long, at 700 pages, it is a fascinating read.



Continued from *One Mother and One Father* p. 9.

*“We return thanks to our mother, the Earth, which sustains us. We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water. We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases. We return thanks to the moon and stars, which have given to us their light when the sun was gone. We return thanks to the sun that has looked upon the Earth with beneficent eye. Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in whom is embodied all goodness, and who directs all things for the good of her children.”* Anon. (Traditional Native American prayer at mealtimes)

I am inspired by the Native American perspective on spirituality, the beauty of “Mother Earth” and oneness with Nature, and I end with a Lakota Sioux prayer that I have occasionally used at Thursday morning Bible Guys, which was translated by Chief Yellow Lark in 1887. I’m struck by some of the same themes and emotional response I have when I try to sing our Hymn 319 – “Spirit”:



Oh, Great Spirit,  
whose voice I hear in the winds  
and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me.  
I am small and weak.  
I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes  
ever behold the red and purple sunset.  
Make my hands respect the things you have made  
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.  
Make me wise so that I may understand  
the things you have taught my people.  
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden  
in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be superior to my brother,  
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.  
Make me always ready to come to you  
with clean hands and straight eyes,  
so when life fades, as the fading sunset,  
my spirit will come to you  
without shame.

## First Friday, October 6, 6 PM

# The difference between looking at and seeing

By Cynthia Winter

*Editor's note – Cindy's artwork will be featured in October's First Friday Art Gallery. Pictured here are samples of her work and her commentary on the theme "For the Beauty of the Earth."*

Just a few lines in Genesis open an immense void ... to life: lush growth of plants and trees (the third day) and life in the ocean and on Earth (the fifth and sixth day), even to the tiniest insect invisible to the human eye. A vast creation is stated in a few lines. There is so much magnificence on this beautiful Earth. We are able to witness only a small part in a lifetime.

I came to my practice of acute observation of nature as a child, when my father, too poor to take us on lavish vacations, took us camping. We lived outdoors and our playthings were in nature. Then my study of art history at Williams College and The Clark Art Institute gifted me with a brilliant Dutch art historian. As a scholarship student, I visited major museums in Holland, guided by this Dutch scholar. The art of the Dutch Golden Age became my favorite period in art. There is no greater appreciation of creation than that expressed in the art of Dutch still life and landscape painters of the 17th Century. Floral paintings, often created by women, show acute attention to detail. They become almost "unreal."

Of course, acute observation of nature shows us not only the budding, growing, greening process, but also fading and gradual decay. Dutch still life exemplified the transient nature of living things, the beginnings of decomposition in a flower petal. Change is always present in these works of art.

After completion of the Masters Degree, I began to pursue sketching and drawing. Then in retirement, I spent more time drawing, as a way to honor my fascination with the small things in nature. It took some years of making art before I realized the profound impact that Dutch art had made on me. All of my drawings were taken directly from nature, often focusing on the earthy and unremarkable. I drew black walnuts, acorns, dried flower pods broken open, and Japanese lanterns in various states of decay and renewal.

I am self taught in the visual arts, with the exception of a number of individual lessons with an artist. She asked me to select a theme for my study. I chose the insides of peppers, with seeds lining a dark, cavernous surface, waiting to be released. I also made drawings of milkweed pods. While reading a





few books about sketching and drawing, I discovered Frederick Franck. He was kindred. He taught me a most valuable concept. He wrote, "There is a difference between looking at and seeing. To see is not to grasp a thing, a being, but to be grasped by it. A withered leaf comes drifting down and lands at my feet. I become that leaf, and as I draw it, it becomes my self portrait." It is with awe and respect that I see the objects in my drawings.

There are two other areas of focus in my drawings: treasures from the sea and flowers/plants. While on Cape Cod each year, Diane, Ladybug (my dog), and I remain very close to the ocean. When the tide is out, we walk the beach daily. This ritual has become a form of prayer. While walking, I gather stones, shells, and pieces of sea glass. I have jars of these objects at home. Some drawings of shells and stones were completed in Provincetown. I set up a small still life on the table, and begin to draw. My objective is always to see and render the awesome detail in nature: color, texture, complexity, the stunning uniqueness of each piece and how its history is recorded on its surface.

There are intimate moments with nature that I express through writing. I write poetry that is inspired by haiku. I wholeheartedly believe that nature touches us intellectually and emotionally, and opens us in unique ways. We have to be still and listen and observe the constant wonder of the life cycle that surrounds us.

Here are two of my nature poems:

#### Heron Prints

As ancient as heron prints in sand  
That's how long our knowing of some souls.  
A lightness of spirit, the song in your eyes,  
a gesture that reaches,  
Makes me say "I love you. I love you."  
Long before you hear my voice.

#### Footsteps

Through the whirring choir of cricket song,  
loud and unbroken,  
I hear the sound of footsteps,  
soft and crisp.  
The leaves ..... they drop, swirl, and tumble  
down.  
They settle, and they crunch into the bed  
below.  
The sound of human steps made by falling  
leaves.

It is with gratitude that I thank God for my ability to see His glorious Creation.

## Author & Illustrator Day

Our partnership and mentoring program with Giffen Elementary School is sponsored by the First Pres Outreach and Mission Committee. It features a during-school tutoring program, and everyone's favorite event, Author & Illustrator Day.

It is a great way to encourage reading in general and to get books in kids' hands for reading at home. This spring's event was another success, with many books given to students and excellent author and illustrator presentations.



## Wizard's Wardrobe Giffen after-school tutoring Back to school

By Debra Fagans

It's hard to believe that it is back to school time already. We, at the Wizard's Wardrobe, are planning to start our after school, one-on-one tutoring at the beginning of October. Wizard's Wardrobe is the home of the South End Neighborhood Tutors, Inc., a non-profit organization providing a free after school tutoring program for elementary school students in the South End. Many volunteers from First Pres are involved.

Our training will take place on two consecutive Saturdays, Sept. 16 and 23, at our program space at 20 Rensselaer Street, from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM.



Applications and information can be found on our website at [wizardwardrobe.org](http://wizardwardrobe.org). Bring a pencil and bag lunch and we will supply the rest. If you are looking for a rewarding experience, please consider joining us.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!!



# This is our children's world



*...on this rock I will build my church...  
Matt. 16:18*



*...let the little children come to me...  
Matt. 19:14*



**“Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray” (Proverbs 22:6)**

## The blessings of raising children in the church

By Prudence Iyok

As is the practice at First Presbyterian Church (FPC), on the day of baptism the child/children are taken around the sanctuary and introduced to their new church family. The congregation pledges to be part of the child's life and true to that promise, the members of FPC put their words to work. They volunteer to teach Sunday school, serve as chaperones on youth trips and teach and serve in the very rich youth/Sunday school curriculum, annual musicals, and the many activities organized for and by the youth.

Exposing them early to such regular church activities as ringing the bell on Sunday mornings, lighting the advent candle during Advent, helping to collect offerings during service are some of the many ways of integrating the youth into Sunday service. Taking part in these activities gives them a sense of belonging and helps them to feel like contributing members of the FPC family.

It is such a blessing for parents raising their children in FPC to be at peace, knowing that on any Sunday morning they can enjoy service with other adults while their little ones are at daycare and to also know that the older children find joy in such a wide variety of church activities.

As summer winds down we feel blessed that in a time when youth are bombarded with information on social media, our rich youth curriculum has engaged and prepared them with discussions on topics such as racism, discrimination and hate, issues they will encounter in their diverse school environments.

Growing up in the church does not exempt our young people from the challenges that come with each stage of growing up. Rather the foundation of being brought up in the house of God can assure them that God is the source of their wisdom, and, when they fall, hopefully they will know where to seek help.

As our children head back to school this September, it is my prayer that wherever they find themselves they will reflect the love, which has surrounded them from their birth.

# Home Repair Project Volunteers beautify neighborhoods

By Christy D'Ambrosio

From April through August, the Home Repair Project task force has been hard at work. Here is a summary of what we have done with photos to illustrate:

Mattie Lee White's home in North Albany was finished, interior and exterior painting, plus minor repairs. Jason and Jordan Scarlett painted the living room.

Mary White's home (Mattie's daughter) around the corner was repaired by Dwight, Leslie, and John Cheu. There was also some painting involved, and Mary, with our encouragement, did the bulk of it herself.

Johnny White's front porch (Mary's brother who lives down the street) was in a dangerous state. The entire porch required shoring up and rebuilding. John Myers has adopted this project with the help of his crew: Johnny White himself, Lynn Ellsworth, John D'Ambrosio and David Haase.

Ella Ferguson's home in the South End was in need of a two-story staircase and vinyl siding. Adam Sperry and Eric Fagans worked on this project together. Eric, who is now on the Board of the South End Improvement Corp, will look into funding for siding.

Christine Buchanan's home in the West Hill neighborhood of Albany is the newest project. The home needs interior and exterior painting as well as numerous repairs. The youth, including Bate, Arthur, Imani and Daniel will begin by painting the interior.

## This is my neighbor's world



Although there is still much work to be done on all these projects, significant progress has been made and the beautification process will continue into the fall and beyond.

# This is our sisters' and brothers' world

## "A Missing Peace"

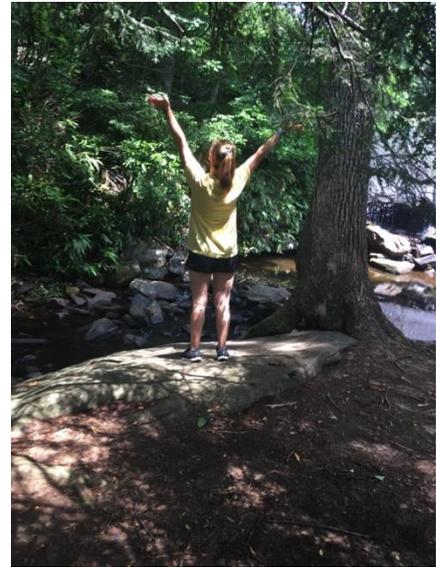
### Montreat Youth Conference

By Christy D'Ambrosio, Youth Director

On Saturday, July 22, ten youth (Jason and Jordan Scarlett, Mia and Maggie Robinson, Arthur and Daniel Iyok, Imani Elad, Akap Takor, Sofia Vance-Ocampo, and Bate Egbe) and four adults (Rev. Miriam Lawrence Leupold, Christy D'Ambrosio, Marilyn and Phillip Riddle) began the fourteen hour trip to Montreat, NC.

The theme this year was "A Missing Peace," and it was a very inspirational program. While there we sang and worshipped together. We attended keynote sessions with over a thousand youth and chaperones, as well as many intimate small group sessions. We played games, made new friends, and even experienced white water rafting on our afternoon off. All of this in the midst of the beautiful wilderness surrounding the Montreat Conference Center on Black Mountain in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina. What a beautiful and spiritually uplifting environment!

Please check out our photos and stories on The Youth of the First Presbyterian Church of Albany Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Youth-of-the-First-Presbyterian-Church-of-Albany-170249029728418/>



## Thy kingdom come on earth

By Keith Barber, Chair of Social Justice and Peacemaking Committee

It sometimes seems like a world gone mad and so much for Christians to do, trying to make things right. Families are split up by heartless deportations of undocumented non-citizens who have lived in the United States for decades, working and contributing to the fabric of our society. The rich continue to get richer and the poor continue not only to get poorer but are threatened with even more severe lives. Health care for ordinary people is a political football. LGBTQ equality that we had thought was a settled matter comes under new attack in several states under mislabeled "religious freedom" laws and the president unilaterally announces in a Tweet that transgender people will no longer be allowed to serve in the armed forces.

So far, we at First Pres, have taken the following actions:

- Supported and helped with New Sanctuary for Immigrants in Albany
- Participated in the work of ICE-Free Capital District (ICE=Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and stood vigil at the local ICE office in support of specific immigrants unjustly detained for deportation
- Participated in rallies at the Capitol encouraging economic justice, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18 and in favor of universal single payer health care
- Taken part in a Truth Commission Hearing on Poverty and plans are underway for a statewide event in Binghamton in the fall, including Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II.
- Done the initial work for a Bread for the World campaign in our congregation this fall.
- Actively participated with FOCUS Advocates and the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State.

We realize we have hardly begun in our quest for a more just and equitable society, especially in the face of powerful opposition. Yet we feel called to move ahead following where we believe God leads us. In going about our work, I think of the hymn *This is My Song*, sung to the melody *Finlandia* by Sibelius. The first two stanzas were written after the First World War in hope, not to be realized, that there would not be a second. Today I find hope in our efforts from the third stanza added in the late 1930s, and written by Methodist theologian Georgia

Elma Harkness, who incidentally came from the tiny Adirondack community that bears her family name, in the Au Sable region:

*This is my prayer, O Lord of all earth's kingdoms:  
Thy kingdom come; on earth thy will be done.  
Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve him,  
And hearts united learn to live as one.  
O hear my prayer, thou God of all the nations,  
Myself I give thee; let thy will be done.*

Peace and Blessings to All.



This is a rainbow world that includes everyone

# Pride Parade



"When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."  
Genesis 9:16



## A theology of creation stewardship

*Editor's note: Noting the deep concern about urgent environmental challenges expressed by many commissioners at the 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2014), chief executives of the six agencies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) appointed a working group to develop a joint response. The group—consisting of at least one staff member per agency—was asked to craft a positive statement of what each agency, and the agencies together, have done and plan to do regarding environmental stewardship. What follows is part of their statement.*

*"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers." - Psalm 24*

Not only are we called to give thanks for God's glorious creation, we are given the task by God to oversee what God has created. We are, according to scripture, God's overseers and caretakers of the whole creation, which includes ourselves.

Unfortunately, we have too often misconstrued God's call to "subdue" and to "have dominion" as license to exploit the manifold gifts of creation. The sad results of our exploitation are all around us. As God's agents, rather than owners of the created order, we must understand that these two notions of "subduing" and exercising "dominion" derive directly from the sovereignty of God, and therefore must reflect the kind of just, loving oversight that is the very nature of God's "dominion" over us and the creation.

We are, at the most basic level, called to be just, loving stewards of all creation, serving and preserving the earth. (Gen 2:15). Our commitment must be to the sustainability that God has willed for God's creation, which means ensuring that all people and all of creation experience sufficiency in the resources they need to thrive, not only now, but for generations to come.

### God's concern for the poor

*"If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill.' And yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." James 2:15-17*

A central theme which runs throughout Scripture is God's concern for the poor, the most

vulnerable, the ones Jesus called "the least of these my brothers and sisters" (Matthew 25:40). It is central to God's mandate for earthly rulers and a "bottom line" issue for God's people. We cannot faithfully address environmental concerns without acknowledging the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on those least able to defend themselves from the pollution of our air and water, the impact of many extractive industries and the unjust distribution of wealth derived from the exploitation of our global resources.

Whatever plans we devise for addressing our environmental concerns, we must begin by asking how our actions will affect the most vulnerable of God's children and maintain our commitment to stand with them in the decisions we make.

### Justice and judgment

*"Now the Lord is about to lay waste the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants... The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers; the heavens languish together with the earth. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left." (Isaiah 24)*

The Scriptures are clear. There are consequences when we forget our role as God's agents charged with care for the earth and we exploit the riches God has given us. It is no coincidence that the condemnations by the prophets in the face of the unfaithfulness of God's people and their leaders often include God's promise of terrible judgment made visible in the destruction of creation and the created order.

### Restoration

*"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22)*

In contrast to the terms of judgment in the prophetic warnings, God promises both a "new heaven" and a "new earth," indeed a full restoration for all who have sought to be faithful in the stewardship of what God has created. That includes both our care for

all sorts of human communities and individuals but also the created order that God declared good at the beginning.

It is this vision of God's future that sustains us and moves us forward in our caring for others and for the whole earth.

## Response

As the people of God, we are therefore called to work, in response to God's calling, to see that all

of God's creation is protected, nurtured and enabled to reach the potential for which God has created it. The concrete implications of that for those of us who are a part of God's family in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) include a call to prayer, education, advocacy and other forms of direct action to glorify God in our care of creation.

We urge all who are a part of our great church to join us in strengthening our witness to the world and in working for greater change in the care and keeping of the earth we inhabit.

## Crop Walk



By Tara Lindsley

You did it again! The 2017 Albany CROP Walk on May 7th was a terrific multigenerational, ecumenical, community outreach event to raise awareness and funds to fight hunger. More than 350 walkers, and many more volunteers, helped raise \$95,505, over \$8,000 more than last year, despite the rainy weather.

First Pres had 20 adult and 6 youth walkers who collected \$10,380 in donations, earning us the "Silver Sneaker Award" again this year. Your generosity is helping to feed our hungry and food insecure neighbors near and far: a quarter of the funds are distributed to food pantries and soup kitchens in our area, and the rest is used for hunger relief and development projects around the world. Plans are afoot (pun intended) for next year. Mark your calendars for CROP Walk 2018 on Sunday, May 6th, 2018!



## What finally works?

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Glenn D. Leupold

*Editor's note: The following sermon is based on the text of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). The biblical text should be read before reading the sermon.*

Two of Jesus' followers have given up. They're heading back to resume their pre-Jesus lives. They followed him; believed in him; placed their hopes in him, and then he was executed before he could take power, or do anything to relieve them of their oppressions. They assume that his death proves God was not really with him, and so they're walking back to Emmaus – about as far as walking from here to downtown Troy. They are reflecting on the things that have happened over the last several days. They are shocked, confused and fearful.

If they are like Jesus' other followers, as soon as it was apparent that Jesus would not be chasing Rome out of town, as soon as it appeared that Jesus was no better at making big changes happen, they started to think about good ol' Emmaus, and all that they'd left behind. On top of the disappointment of their leader's failing, and the less-than-supportive way they acted, they have now been hearing rumors going around the town that their executed leader had risen from the dead. It's all a little too much, so these two head to Emmaus. As they walk, they are aware of approaching footsteps. A vaguely familiar stranger joins them on the road. They don't recognize him, but it is the risen Jesus. We who hear this story from Luke know it is Jesus, but Cleopas and his traveling companion do not. We are left anticipating the 'how'. How will they find out it is Jesus?

How indeed. Will they come to know him by reciting a creed? That's essentially what they do in verse 19. After the incognito Jesus asks them what has been happening, Luke says they tell this stranger about "...Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how [the] chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him... it is now the third day since these things took place... [the women saw] angels who said that he was alive." That sounds a lot like "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only son, our Lord, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried...the third day he rose again from the dead." They say the creed, but it does not help them to see Jesus in their midst.

Then Jesus gives them scripture, the word of God. He reminds these two of what the prophets have said. Verse 25 says that he reminds them of all



that the prophets declared. After that, they still do not recognize him. To them he is still this ignorant stranger from out of town who is not at all hip to what has been happening; he is clueless about the latest, hottest prospect for being the messiah: Jesus of Nazareth – I mean, where has this guy been? Everyone's knows what has just happened to him. Next, Jesus offers what must have been an astoundingly good expository sermon that explained the scriptures to these two followers. Beginning with Moses and through all the prophets, he interprets for the two of them all of the scriptures that show how this is what must happen to their messiah. To him.

Still they do not get it. They still do not recognize him. The creed didn't work. Recalling the scriptures did not work. The best sermon ever didn't work. Was Jesus getting exasperated? I wonder if it is precisely because of the failure of these two to actually comprehend him that Jesus appears like he is heading on to the next town. Did he think, "Wow. Maybe these two are not worth my time!"

To their credit, the two followers offer the stranger some hospitality. When they see that he is going to continue on the road, they tell him that since it is getting late and they are about to have a meal that he should stop, eat with them and stay. If their ignorance made Jesus consider going on, did their act of hospitality make Jesus think, "Ah. Good. Maybe these two really *are* my disciples after all. Maybe they are not a lost cause." Their act of charity is an acting out of the redemption that Jesus embodied. They had spent their time on the road grousing about how the redemption of the people had eluded them again; but now, instead of continuing to talk about redemption, they act it out. They engage in a redeeming deed: they invite a total stranger to share a meal. It is in this act that they start to see who it is that is with them. What finally works is an action; only then do things begin to fall into place. Only at this point do the two disciples learn the identity of the stranger. He was not known to them in the discussions on the road, Luke reports. Verse 35 says, "...he was known to them in the breaking of

the bread.” When they move from words to deeds, clarity comes.

One would expect that when they realize who he is, they would hoist him onto their shoulders and parade him back to Jerusalem so that a big party could break out with all of Jesus’ followers. Instead, as soon as they recognize him, he vanishes from their sight. They wanted him to stay. Peter had tried to get Jesus to stay at the transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared and Jesus’ face “shone”. Peter was so taken by the event that he wanted it to not end at all. He offered to pitch a tent for all of them. He wanted Jesus to stay.

Cleopas and his traveling companion want Jesus to stay. And so do we. But he will not. He didn’t stay for the two followers at Emmaus. He didn’t stay for Peter at the transfiguration. We ask him to stay, but his reply is “follow.” “Follow me” he says and he is off. If we don’t get moving, he can vanish altogether. He says “Follow me” over his shoulder as he moves out into the world, sharing his Holy Spirit. He moves out and blends into this crowded world so well and so completely, that those of us who have decided to follow after him must search every face we come across in the off chance that it might be his. We dare not miss it, so we look into the faces of the poor and lonely; the common and aged faces.

Did Cleopas wonder about every person he met from then on? Did he approach every stranger with an awareness that this one could be ‘my Lord’ yet again? Did he start to act more lovingly and generously with all the strangers he met from then on? Did he become compulsively hospitable?

If we are careful and thorough we would do well to handle each person we meet with care just in case it is Jesus. If we are diligent we will fill a few extra stomachs, soothe some sorrows, clothe an under-clothed beggar, just in case one of them is his stomach; in case they are his sorrows; in case it is his bare back. You can never be too sure. Of course the problem with this approach is that we are likely to forget exactly what he looked like. With so many faces to sort through, some of the details are likely to get lost or forgotten. ‘Were his eyes

brown?’ ‘Was his hair black or was it a bit speckled with gray like that man at the FOCUS food pantry?’ ‘Did he walk perfectly straight or was he a little stooped like that elderly woman at the supermarket?’ ‘Was his skin tone olive or darker or what?’ We’ll get a bit confused. Chances are, that in looking for him and wanting so much to find him, we’ll begin to see a little bit of him in everyone we meet. After a while, the whole human race may begin to bear a family resemblance to the one we seek, the one we call ‘our Lord,’ which means that when he walks up to us in his completeness we may not recognize him. We may not see him; at least not at first, just like Cleopas and his companion didn’t recognize him. It may take a redemptive action to see him.

Those two disciples had not planned it as a sacred moment, but in the sharing of their bread with a stranger they recognized the risen Lord in their fellow traveler. We rehearse this sharing on Sundays in worship as the bread is broken among us. We then leave this place to go out into the world to live love-based, kindness-based lives that offer various kinds of bread to a hurting world – and in those moments of hospitality, Christ’s presence is revealed.

‘The sacred moments,’ writes Frederick Buechner, ‘the moments of miracle, are often the everyday moments which, if we do not look with more than our eyes or listen with more than our ears, reveal only the gardener in the graveyard, or a stranger coming down the road behind us, or a meal like any other meal. But if we look with our hearts, if we listen with all of our being and our imagination; if we live our lives not from pleasure to pleasure, vacation to vacation, from escape to escape, but rather from the miracle of one instant of our precious lives to the miracle of the next, what we may see - is Jesus himself.’

He is in the breaking of the bread; he is in others, and he is in you. Amen

This sermon borrows from “Emmaus and Back Again” by George H. McConel. Quote by Frederick Buechner is from *The Magnificent Defeat*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 87-88.

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**REFLECTIONS** a photo-essay journal

Autumn 2017

First Presbyterian Church, Albany, NY

September 10, 9:30 am - Worship in  
the Park, followed by Picnic

**Fall programming begins  
Sunday, September 17**

- 8:30 am Communion worship  
around the table
- 9:30 am Classes for all ages --  
There is a class for  
you!
- 10:45 am Worship with full music  
program



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