

## The Alliance and Earth Day 2020

By Betsy J. Sowers

Here we are on the threshold of Faith Climate Action Week and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day, and the world has been turned upside down by the novel coronavirus. Some argue that this is not the time to ask people to think about climate justice, but as a Christian, I believe that this apocalyptic (revelatory!) moment is a *Kairos* moment, a time for us to help people connect the dots on many levels. First, there are clear links between the pandemic and climate crises.

- The threat of increasing, and increasingly devastating, pandemics has been predicted for years, as habitat loss and climate change bring humans into contact with wild animals driven from their homes and tropical diseases as they move north.
- Deaths from COVID-19 are greater in places people are regularly exposed to more air pollution. Six million people globally die from air pollution alone annually, yet that pandemic has remained almost invisible and unreported.
- Both crises impact the most vulnerable first and worst – racial and religious minorities, refugees, the impoverished and our other-than-human kin.
- Decades of attacks on scientific data have driven climate denial and created a suspicion of science that led many to deny the seriousness of the pandemic until their situations turned desperate.
- Then there's the problematic human tendency not to understand the fact of exponential growth of both pandemic disease and climate change, and the need to act before things get bad, lest we pay the price in lives and livelihoods.

The difference between a pandemic outbreak and climate change is the speed with which they are unfolding. The climate catastrophe has already had devastating effects on vulnerable human populations and our other-than-human neighbors, but many of us who have had the benefit of various kinds of privilege have remained unscathed. The novel coronavirus has torn away the veil of privilege and given many of us a direct experience of how billions of people in the world live every day with the stresses of food, housing, health, education, and job insecurity. These are all matters of justice and of faith. As we emerge from the pandemic, faith communities have a special responsibility to remember its lessons and to apply them to the slower, but inexorably unfolding, climate crisis.

Here's the good news. Climate activists have been calling for years for a World War II-scale response to climate change in order to prevent catastrophe, but that response has been dismissed as impossible. Yet when faced with a pandemic, the U.S. *alone* came up with over two trillion dollars almost overnight. If that is possible, then it is also possible to address climate change, even to make a clean energy transition central to restructuring an economy that includes everyone without destroying God's creation. Some version of a Green New Deal, one that includes racial, gender, economic and creation justice is possible. The #JustRecovery movement can succeed. For a people who proclaim the Easter reality of resurrection and the profound love of God for the *world*, those are possibilities we need to proclaim prophetically and join the Spirit to bring to birth. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day is a good time to begin. Here are some resources to help your congregation get started.

### FAITH CLIMATE ACTION WEEK AND EARTH DAY OPPORTUNITIES

Visit Creation Justice Ministries' [April Action Center](#). Tips and tools to make a difference for God's creation this Earth Month include:

- 2020 Earth Sunday toolkit: "The Fierce Urgency of Now" <http://bit.ly/35PerN6>
- April 2020 "Care for Creation" bulletin insert
- Link to Virtual Earth Day worship at The National Cathedral, Sunday, April 19, at 2:00
- Ecumenical Advocacy Days virtual advocacy opportunity for legislation in Congress
- Faith Climate Action Week toolkit
- Action Alert: Support the 30x30 Resolution to Save Nature

#### **Interfaith Power and Light's Faith Climate Action Week 2020: "Love Made Visible"**

- Get a free kit from Interfaith Power and Light that includes a ritual for planting a tree on the grounds of your congregation as part of its "For the Love of Trees" campaign, and other resources. [Download it here.](#)
- [Join IPL's Love Made Visible Climate March online!](#) Out of our love and care for our neighbors, and to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus, IPL invites you to share your climate march sign on social media during Faith Climate Action Week April 17-26 to continue bringing awareness to the climate crisis.
- The feature film for this year's Faith Climate Action Week – *The Human Element* – is being offered for free online by Earth Vision Institute during Faith Climate Action Week to all Interfaith Power & Light congregations, organizations and individuals.  
[Sign up here to receive the link to view on April 17, good through April 26.](#)

#### **Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22,**

- **Earth Day Sound the Call** - An invitation from the Jewish community to interfaith partners for an online blowing of the shofar, shofar app, or other instrument on Earth Day. Find out more at <https://bit.ly/2WQpN2R>.
- Join the global **Earth Day prayer** at noon [here](#).
- Attend the webinar for faith communities, **The Earth Is the Lord's** at 1:00 with the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr., who coined the term "environmental racism." The webinar will focus on the role of faith communities in resisting those powers that seek to rule and desecrate what is not theirs [bit.ly/2V2IM94](http://bit.ly/2V2IM94).
- **April 22-24, Earth Day Live.** Young people and adults will come together for a three-day livestream event focused on climate action: Earth Day Live. With training sessions, performances, and appearances from scientists, celebrities, politicians, and youth activists, this 72-hour livestream and online mobilization will engage people across the country and around the world in collective action to protect their communities and the climate. [RSVP for Earth Day Live.](#)
- **Find more digital Earth Day actions and events at** <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2020/@earthdaynetwork>, where every hour there will be a new way for you to demand action and drive change. Then sign up to continue taking action at EARTHRISE [earthday.org/earthrise/](http://earthday.org/earthrise/).

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