

2016 Week in Washington

National Religious Campaign for Creation Care

Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas Is the 2016 Steward Of God's Creation



(L-R) Rev. Owen Owens, Connie Hanson, Rev. Tom Carr, Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb

The National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (NRCCC) held its 18th annual Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC on September 12. Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas received the prestigious Steward Of God's Creation Award for 2016. One of the nominators, Rev. Tom Carr, said that Margaret goes "deep into her own soul" to reflect and seek God's wisdom and then emerges to effective action. Rabbi Fred

Scherlinder Dobb echoed that sentiment after mentioning Margaret's humble nature. "As a Jew, I will say the adage of Margaret who is one who teaches the gospel and when necessary uses words." Connie Hanson remarked upon Margaret's remarkable harmonization of patience, loving kindness, and perseverance.

In her acceptance talk, Margaret mentioned a three-part framework for the heart as a way of helping us to respond wisely and creatively to the challenges we face: First, an **awakened heart** that is more deeply, frequently, and consciously attuned to love. Second, a **broken heart** that enters into the pain and suffering in the world, shares it, and touches it with love. Third, a **radiant heart** that bears witness in tangible ways to God's love that has set us free. [See page 19 for full remarks]

Dr. Chad Hanson, Director of the John Muir Project, gave a plenary speech about the value of forested lands. Among his insightful remarks, Hanson said that if U.S. National Forest lands are protected instead of logged, these woods will annually sequester the carbon emissions of 15 to 24 million vehicles. Conversely, if we go back to higher levels of logging as some in Congress are calling for, it will lead to an annual addition of carbon emissions equivalent to 20 million more vehicles. Hanson also spoke of the ecological importance of natural occurring forest fires and how some effort in Congress are seeking to use fire suppression as a backdoor effort to subsidize and increase logging cuts in national forests.



Chad Hanson

Additional talks and prayers were given. This prayer breakfast had lighter attendance than in some years yet the spirit and camaraderie was among the best.

NRCCC Meets With Top White House Officials

A key meeting was held at the White House Executive Office Building on September 13. Twenty representatives from America's leading religious groups concerned about the increasing threat of global climate change met with White House officials. The purpose was to present religious perspectives on U.S. climate policy and to emphasize the increasing impacts that rising levels of carbon dioxide are having on the oceans and climate generally.

The White House delegation was led by Rohan Patel, Special Assistant to President Obama. Mark Antoniewicz is Assistant Director for the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Kate Segarra is the Assistant Director of ocean policy for the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Oceanographer for the U.S. Navy. Bo Machayo, Office of Public Engagement, CEQ, and Drew J. McConville, CEQ.

Dr. Richard Miller (Creighton University) and Rev. Tom Carr asked that President Obama give a major nationally-televised talk from the oval office to the nation on the critical need to address climate. The President needs to be truthful with the American people and the world about our situation, to state that we need to act swiftly and boldly, and to declare this crisis is not only a moral, ethical and spiritual issue, but a matter of generational justice as well.

Continued ... White House Meeting

Second, a key step for the Administration would be to apply its climate policy more consistently across government departments. For instance, the **Dept. of Interior should end drilling for oil or gas on public lands and put a moratorium on new coal leases.** This would show that the Administration is serious about address climate change. Rohan Patel quickly responded. He says that the Obama Administration is vigorously promoting renewable energy via programs such as its Desert Conservation Plan. The Administration's strategy combines a carrot and stick approach – promoting solutions that increasingly cost less in the future, while making other energy options costlier. The hope is that the next administration will continue to use fuel efficiency standards, and tax credits, and ramp up the cost of fossil fuels.

Chad Hanson said that the U.S. Forest Service should end salvage logging. He then reported on a new study that shows that forests which are not logged are less likely to burn in forest fires. Logging reduces the resilience of forests to fire. Rohan Patel seems amazed. "We haven't heard that before," and asked Hanson to send him the research. [At a prior White House meeting in 2015 Rohan Mark Antoniewicz, Kate Segarra had declared the importance of some logging for purposes of forest thinning].



(Left to Right) Allen Johnson, Rohan Patel, Mark Antoniewicz, Kate Segarra
Photograph is courtesy of Beautifell Photography

Dave Carroll, Grantsburg, Wisconsin, recommended the use of the 1973 Presidential War Powers Act to address climate change. The purpose is to redirect the DoD to speed the implementation of worldwide solar power. The Pentagon's analysis confirms climate change is the number one threat to national security. "Drop solar systems, not bombs."

Other participants added to the conversation. The gathering commenced and concluded with prayer. Further details, photos, and videos will be on the website, www.nrccc.org



NRCCC Delegation at the White House Executive Office Building
Photograph is courtesy of Beautifell Photography by Christine Ellman

Continued....Washington Week

A group of us with NRCCC met at Sen. Bernie Sanders' office with Katie Thomas, Policy Advisor for Energy and the Environment, to discuss Sanders' influential leadership in the climate movement. We urged that Sanders lead a major event this spring. Our discussion was hopeful.

Several of us accepted invitations to participate in EcoAmerica's 2016 Climate Leadership Summit. 250 organization leaders in health, business, religion, culture, philanthropy, and community interacted toward improving effectiveness on climate. Stellar presentations, conversational breakout sessions, and interpersonal networking made for an inspirational and informative gathering.



Jasilyn Charger, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, led a youth run from North Dakota to Washington, DC



Several of us participated in a Day Of Action protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. Native people including Standing Rock Sioux led the action

at Lafayette Park and then in front of the White House. Their speeches, dances, prayers, and pleas for justice were eloquent and persuasive. Other leaders included Rev. Lennox Yearwood, who heads the Hip Hop Caucus, and Sen. Bernie Sanders. **SUPPORT THE WATER PROTECTORS!**

Clean Energy Revolution Summit

Hundreds of environmentalists, community leaders and scientists attended the Summit for the Clean Energy Revolution in Philadelphia on Saturday, July 23. The event was held a day ahead of Sunday's march in the city with thousands of people. **Allen Johnson**, Coordinator of *Christians For The Mountains*, participated.

The Summit included a religious-activism workshop headed by **Rabbi Mordechai Liebling**. The Summit was sponsored and funded for participants by *Food & Water Watch*, whose founder and anti-fracking activist, **Wenonah Hauter**, participated. Other leaders included biologist **Sandra Steingraber**, and **Robert Howarth** who has pioneered studies on methane from the gas industry on climate.

A number of native Americans representing several western tribes and ranging from youth to seniors spoke eloquently about the injustices their people suffer from invasive, polluting extractive industries.

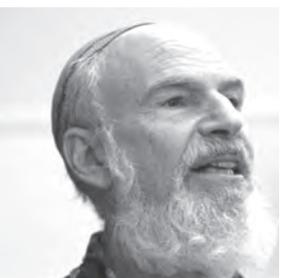
On Sunday thousands marched for climate justice in downtown Philadelphia. The following Monday another large contingent marched from downtown Phillie to a FDR Park adjacent to the Wells Fargo Center where the Democratic National Convention was getting underway. The rally called for policymakers to commit to stronger action to address the mounting threat of climate chaos.



Wenonah Hauter



Robert Howarth



Mordechai Liebling



Sandra Steingraber



It's A Gas Summit

It's a Gas! That's fracking, pipeline construction, and the pollution that comes with it. Leaders from several states convened at the Old Historic School in Oak Hill, West Virginia, July 29-31 for the second "It's A Gas" summit. This was a roll-up-our-sleeves work session by activists to align our organizations on a shared strategy for resisting fracking and related infrastructure such as pipelines and compressor stations.



Tom Genung

The gathering worked on effective strategies. **Tom Genung from Bold Nebraska** shared the successful tactics that eventually quashed the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. **Dana Dolney** discussed her organizing principles from the frontlines in Pennsylvania including gathering personal stories from impacted people. **Ellen Darden and Laurie Ardison of POWHR**, told about their organizing landowners in Monroe County, WV. **Brandon Richardson** and locals discussed how they gained massive local support to get a county commission ordinance banning frack waste that has plagued their nearby neighborhood. **Allen Johnson, Christians For The Mountains**, and activist **Matthew Louis-Rosenberg** conducted a session on direct action. **Jim Kotcon** of WV Sierra Club and others worked on regulatory strategies. The next "It's A Gas!" Summit will be held in January 2017.

Although unconventional fracking is currently slow due to a worldwide energy glut with resultant low prices, proposed massive pipelines are in the works. And so is resistance. For example, the proposed 42" Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) and the proposed 42" Atlantic Coast Pipelines (ACP) would cross some of the most pristine, karst-laden, scenic, and ecologically-fragile areas in the East. These multi-billion dollar projects would lock despoiling fracking in for many years as well as continuing climate-damaging methane leakage. Pass-through rural regions would get no gas or jobs yet incur significant negative economic consequences such as ecosystem damage, scenic degradation, property devaluation, and potential gas explosion. *Christians For The Mountains* is engaged in local and regional leadership to thwart yet another predacious extreme energy exploitation in Appalachia.

