NH UCC Environmental Justice Team Congregational Course

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Before you start your Congregational Course:


Rev. Brooks Berndt is the UCC Environmental Justice Minister.

Each section may be over a week or two or whatever time you need to process each item; Folks may watch the videos or do the reading prior to you meeting together.

Take turn for spiritual reading on nature from scripture, poem, or spiritual writings on nature.

Don’t rush. You may stay focused on the material for more than one week.

**Part 1 Climate Change: The Cathedral on Fire**

This section, like all sections, may be extended over two weeks.

**Summary:** We will exam our calling to care for God’s Creation and climate change and that God’s cathedral is on fire.

Read: *Cathedral on Fire*. Prologue and Chapter 1, Answer the discussion questions at the end and the actions to expand our focus.

Watch:

UCC Webinar: Dr. Katherine Hayhoe (Evangelical Christian and Climate Scientist) 2017 Climate Science Report, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=628943940866159&ref=watch_permalink

This Changes Everything Naomi Klein, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqw99rJYq8Q&list=TLPQMDgwMjJwMjEVFlAB01Chug&index=2

Composting for Churches, https://www.ucc.org/composting-for-churches/?inf_contact_key=ab4da3f2bfb579cd76d7ed338e541116358d5485884e2f31e6019a0d26c8b0


Discussion: Discuss your experience of seeing climate change in your community, in New Hampshire, and the United States? Why should we as a church respond to climate change?

Check out the NH UCC Environmental Justice Team Website. It has a number of useful resources, https://www.nhcucc.org/conference-ministries/justice-witness-ministry/environmental-justice
Part 2  Greening Your Worship

**Summary:** How do we bring God’s creation into our worship? Discuss one or two of the list of suggestions from the UCC on Greening Your Worship and Theology. How can include creation care?

**Greening Worship Resources,**

An example is a Green Seder for several years at MCC United Church of Christ and the Little White Chapel for several years.

Read Cathedral on Fire, chapter 2 and discuss the questions and actions to expand our focus.

Part 3 Green your Church Campus

**Summary:** Do an inventory of Earth actions of your church over the years; create a narrative of what your accomplish. What have you done to reduce your green footprint of the church? Insulation of building, windows, and doors?

**Watch:** Greening Congregation, California Interfaith Power & Light Coordinator, Southern California, Allis Druffel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9lnEfp_9hA

Part 4 Environmental Justice Issues

**Summary:** The UCC General Synod 2013 called On Making UCC Churches More Carbon Neutral. Prior to your meeting take the time to calculate your carbon footprint individually and share your footprint with others: https://www.terrapass.com/carbon-footprint-calculator What can you individually do to reduce your carbon footprint as a church?

Read Chapter 3 & 4 Cathedral on Fire, answer the discussion questions and the actions to extend our focus. (Divide this into two weeks.)

TED Talk Carbon https://www.ted.com/talks/ted_halstead_a_climate_solution_where_all_sides_can_win?language=en

Basic explanation of how carbon fee and dividend works
https://energyinnovationact.org/how-it-works/
Part 5  Environmental Racism

Summary: The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr. was a central leader in the launch of the UCC environmental justice movement in the 1980s and 90s. He coined the phrase “environmental racism” and played instrumental roles in the Warren County civil disobedience campaign, the landmark Toxic Wastes and Race report and the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. Rev. Gordon Rank summarizes the history of environmental racism in the colonization of indigenous peoples and addresses the issues at Stand Rocking Reservation.

Read Chapter 5, Cathedral on Fire. Answer the questions and look at the expanded actions.

Do read the following essay of Dr. James Cone, one of the prophets of black theology in America.


Rev. Ben Chavis, “The Earth is the Lord’s, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kecgGjan8Uk

Ben Chavis, “Speech at UCC Environmental Justice Press Conference,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCQKiPUfVgVs

Environmental Racism goes back to the colonization of the Americas and indigenous genocide. Listen to Rev. Gordon Rankin’s talk on Standard Rock and his genealogy of environmental racism in American colonization of the land and displacement of indigenous peoples.


Why All Americans Should be Care for Environmental Racism, Indigenous Persons https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeNqlqFLW8A

Part 6 Youth Voices  and Climate Justice

Summary: Environmental Justice is intergenerational. The youth have taken the prophetic lead to remind us of our responsibilities to care for the Earth and all life. "We are the last generation that can end climate change We can and we will.”  Khishigjargal,
Age 24, Mongolia. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.” Discuss how we as a church can assist our youth in fighting climate change.


How have Youth have changed the Climate Movement, https://www.yesmagazine.org/environment/2019/12/18/climate-change-youth-movement/

Chicken video explaining carbon fee dividend https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD64kaTY5Vg

Hear the moral voices and environmental imagination of youth around the world:

Kids and Climate Change TED Talk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bK1kyM7Pevc

Greta Thunberg https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAmmUIEsN9A

Amanda Gorman, Earthrise, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwOvBv8RLmo

Indigenous Youth of N. Mindanao, Philippines https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsbkkmQG0KM

Part 7 Partnerships and Advocacy. Explore the following sites and subscribe to newsletters.

Summary: One of the best ways to keep up on local environmental and national news is subscribe and connect to campaigns of state environmental organizations.

Pollinator, UCC Environmental Newsletter, https://www.pollinator.org/


Check out the IPL NH energy conservation grants. Rev. Rob Grabill is UCC, Dartmouth Congregational Church is a member on the New Hampshire IPL Steering Committee

Sierra Club NH- https://www.sierraclub.org/new-hampshire
"Ready for 100" campaign to get towns and cities to approve a goal of 100% renewable energy by a certain date
- ongoing campaign to get "Beyond Coal", shutting down coal plants
- support of the Green New Deal

350 NH – https://350nh.org/
"Fighting for a just transition to a renewable energy economy and ... an end to fossil fuel use and expansion."
- goals to prevent new fossil fuel infrastructure, pressure elected officials to champion bold solutions to the climate crisis, and to train community leaders.
- many upcoming trainings this spring (see website or facebook page)

League of Conservation Voters (LCV) – 
https://volunteernh.galaxydigital.com/agency/detail/?agency_id=48010
"Builds political power for people and the planet"
- goals to influence policy, hold politicians accountable, and win elections
- produce the National Environmental Scorecard
- work for racial, social and environmental justice

Citizens’ Climate Lobby – https://citizensclimatelobby.org/chapters/NH_South_Central/
There are numerous regional New Hampshire climate lobby. Check out the nearest to your church.
Goal to create the political will for a livable world through enacting carbon fee and dividend (CF&D) legislation
- focus on lobbying state and federal legislators to educate them about CF&D, and get them to endorse the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act
- emphasis on bipartisanship and respectful dialogue
- value diversity and enable new voices through trainings and support as people learn how to lobby with a team

Part 8 Loving Nature and Praying with Nature

How The Bible teaches us that Nature Speaks
https://newedenministry.com/2019/05/12/how-the-bible-teaches-that-nature-speaks/?fbclid=IwAR0He4RS33s2-7lubnvo39r4haZet2KGajq-J1F0ytvuEuxJMthErR2v0M

Praying with a Piece of Nature,

Who will speak for the Trees? Proposed Resolution for the Rights of Nature,


What is the “Wild Church” and where is it going?
https://www.biblicalleadership.com/blogs/what-is-wild-church-and-where-is-it-going/

Part XI Becoming a Creation Justice Church

Summary: The exploration in this process is to evolve to became a UCC Creation Justice Church and thus become a climate church, capable of mitigating the extremities of climate
change. Here is an opportunity to summarize what you have learned and to express in an Earth covenant of our responsibilities for creation care. Spent time discussing what covenant your community can make for Earth care and a commitment to renew on Earth Day Sunday. Draft a covenant.


Part X The Goal and Dream of an Ecological Civilization

Summary: Discussion of what an Ecological Civilization looks like resonates what Jesus understood as God’s kin-dom is like. Canadian clergy and theologian Bruce Sanguin writes,

I suggest that we drop the “g” and change it to kin-dom of God. But let’s first appreciate the edginess of the metaphor. Its power lies in the way it subverts and undermines the dominant patriarchal power of Jesus’ day—the kingdom of Caesar. The kingdom of God is simply what the world would look like if God, not Caesar, ruled.¹

The metaphor of kin-dom is a family metaphor. To be kin is to belong, no questions asked. In an evolutionary universe, I’m interested in kin as a metaphor that includes “all of us,” not just “us.” From this perspective, kin is not just about our tribe, our nation, our family, our religion, or even our species. Kin suggests the radical belonging of all our relations human and other-than-human. Viewed holistically from the perspective of the universe story kin-dom breaks down false boundaries that separate and alienate.²

Discuss the Jesus’s kin-dom of God and how it overlaps with a dream of an ecological civilization.
