

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND CREATION CARE COMMUNITY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



ABOVE: "Humans need HOPE to weather the storms of life. Hope is our anchor. Hope is our sustainer." Message included in the booklet at the Youth Delegation in 2025. Photographed by Diana Gilday at the 159th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, November 14-15.

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Greening Acres: How to Create Your Own Wildlife Sanctuary



BY BENJAMIN SPIER

Growing up on a farm in New York's Hudson Valley, I could look out the kitchen window at the comings and goings of wild animals in the meadow and on the nearby creek: chickadees and woodpeckers, deer and rabbits, hawks and herons. That is 100+ miles away from the densely populated corner of Brooklyn I've called home for the past 26 years—yet I keep discovering little pockets of nature tucked among the high rises.

One such unlikely pocket is the Poplar Street Community Garden, located on a wedge of land beneath the off-ramp to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Upon the completion of the BQE in 1964, the site languished as a dumping ground for construction debris and assorted refuse. In the mid-1980s nearby residents hauled away the trash, put up a fence, and began planting shrubs; the New York City Department of Transportation planted dogwoods and elm trees. Over the following decades neighbors planted a vegetable garden and an insect-herb garden as well as apple trees while letting small parcels revert to naturalized woodlands. Looking at the garden today, one would hardly believe it was once a dumpsite!

Besides being a work of urban neighborhood greening, the Poplar Street garden, and the surrounding block, are signposted as a "Certified Wildlife Habitat" by the National Wildlife Federation. Nationwide there are more than 300,000 Certified Wildlife Habitats, with at least 1,000 affiliated with houses of worship (including, as of August 2024, All Saints Episcopal Church in San Leandro, California). To obtain certification from the NWF, your property must satisfy the following criteria:

- Native plantings (the NWF recommends at least 70% native species);
- Food—at least three sources of food for wildlife (pollinator plants, seeds, nuts, berries, foliage, etc.);

[cont'd on pg. 2]



ABOVE: St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity Churchyard, Christmas Day 2025. Photo Credit: Benjamin Spier



Liturgical Resources for the Season



BY THE REV. MARK GENSZLER AND
THE REV. MAXINE BARNETT

What is the new creation in Christ, and how does all creation take part in this making-all-things-new? What does this look like in our ritual life?

Lent and Easter season invite us deeper into practices of reflection, repentance, and renewal. It is a good season to reexamine our collective relationship with the earth — and through the lens of the work of reconciliation present in the whole Body of Christ. How may we make real and present the embodied reconciling love of Christ in our relationship with the earth? — starting with our immediate habitats and neighborhoods and extending through the ecological systems and human webs of relationship with the other-than-human world.

The Church of England had a 'give up single-use plastics for Lent' challenge a few years ago. Great idea! But also: what effect do the Defense Department's procurement practices have on energy policy and consumption practices? Reflect, repent. And learn to trust that God is renewing all things.

When we come to exclaim at Easter, 'Alleluia! Christ is risen!' and respond that the Lord is risen indeed!, this 'making-all-things-new' begins with the resurrection of the Lord, and gathers all things — all species, all matter, all creation — unto the Lord in fullness of life.

This renewing is for all creation.

How shall we best participate in what God already is doing with and for all creation?

Basic stuff, like incorporating praying for our relationship with the other-than-human world in our prayers and corporate worship. Repenting of the wrong we do, and which is done on our behalf. Looking in trust to see — and touch! — the wounds of the vulnerable body of the earth, and also learning to see where healing flows.

A Stations of the Cross can name contemporary places of violence and abuse — of the earth and of one another. A Great Litany can name these.

And, all Easter season we can name what a joy and blessing that we have finally begun to learn the song all creation already knows and sings to God. When we cry 'Holy, Holy, Holy' in our prayers of continual thanksgiving each week or each day, we merely — merely! — sing the song with faltering voices that other species have sung and still sing, forever. Our species seems to need continual repentance. Continual relearning, to rejoice in harmony with others, properly praising God not only with our lips but with our lives.

But, then, this grace abounds. Rogationtide comes, and we pray for the grace of rain, and a rain of grace. That our lives and the earth may be and become ever more fruitful. That, with the renewing gift of the Spirit, we may be aligned with God's purposes here, for the life of the whole creation.



ABOVE: Poplar Street Community Garden in autumn.
Photo © Benjamin Spier

BELOW: Poplar Street Wildlife Habitat.
Photo © Benjamin Spier



Greening Acres: How to Create Your Own Wildlife Sanctuary [cont'd from pg. 1]

- Water—a source of clean water on or close to your property (for example, a pond, spring or rain garden);
- Cover—at least two places for wild animals to shelter from the elements and predators (such as trees, brambles or ground cover)
- Places for animals to raise their young (dead trees, shrubbery);
- Sustainable practices—soil and water conservation, control of non-native vegetation, pollution reduction, recycling.

It is heartening to find green oases for birds and bees and butterflies in the city, not to mention a grassroots movement to restore some of the millions of acres of natural habitat lost to development. Yet as you set about creating a haven for wildlife in your backyard or churchyard, it would be prudent to remember your neighbors. Being respectful of local laws, homeowner association regulations (if applicable), and your community's landscape aesthetics is paramount. Above all, communicating with your neighbors will go a long way in furthering the goal of a greener environment and planet.

For information on obtaining certification for your wildlife garden, as well as resources and tip sheets on native plants and insects in your area, go to nwf.org/certifiedwildlifehabitat (or, for houses of worship, nwf.org/sacredgrounds).

Message from the Missioner for Environmental Justice

THE REV. MATTHEW MOORE



As I see it, giving up a guilty pleasure for forty days, and then going right back to it on Easter Day, is unlikely to do much

for our relationship with God. The same goes for taking on some virtuous activity and then dropping it the minute “Alleluia” is back on our lips. My objection is not so much to giving up or taking on, but to doing so on such a time-limited basis. I have heard that Bishop Barbara Harris once said that if giving something up for Lent brings you closer to God, you should probably consider giving it up for good. So this Lent I am indeed planning to give something up, and also to take something on, as a first step toward making these changes in my life for good.

What I’m giving up is hopelessness. We live in a time that doesn’t seem to leave much room for hope. Each day brings yet another frontal attack on the health of the earth, on the rights of immigrants, on the increasingly tattered fabric of our democracy. How can we remain hopeful in the face of such relentless evil? All that notwithstanding, I agree with John Pavlovitz that there is no respectable alternative to hope in times like these. Of course we must distinguish, as Pavlovitz does, between genuine hope and “toxic optimism, an ignoring of the data in front of us.” He defines true hope as “a steadfast, stubborn refusal to believe that the present is permanent . . . that something surprising or beautiful can’t still happen on the horizon of history.” And he urges hope upon us, not just as a possibility but as a sacred duty. Hope, and resistance to evil

RIGHT: Izembek Refuge, Alaska, 2019
Photo: Lisa Hupp/USFWS
Public Domain



energized by hope, are debts we owe to those forebears who stood steadfast through their own terrible times, and left us a world better than it would have been if they had surrendered to hopelessness. And hope and resistance are debts we owe to those to whom we will bequeath the world. If you’re ready to give up hopelessness for Lent, I encourage you to read Pavlovitz’s post in full (“I Get it. Hope Feels Stupid Right Now. Choose it Anyway” at johnpavlovitz.substack.com; dated 15 January 2026).

“...may we all take on the joy that comes from doing what is right.”

What I’m taking on for Lent, and for good, is joy. In the current state of the world, joy might seem even more out of place than hope. But if there is no joy in our lives, we defeat God’s purposes for us, and we forget that we care about justice because we want all living beings to know the joy that God created them for. Workers for justice have an undeserved reputation for joylessness. An old Doonesbury cartoon paints a more accurate picture. It shows Mark Slackmeyer, Trudeau’s tireless radical, on a break from a campus protest against the Vietnam War, digging with a broad grin into a proffered paper bag. The caption is “Even revolutionaries like chocolate chip cookies.” On a real-life, and more profound note, I recall an anecdote about Gandhi, who had been trailed by a visiting journalist through a long and taxing day. After supper, Gandhi took off with his followers for a brisk walk. The journalist, astonished at the great man’s unflagging energy, asked if he ever took a vacation. “I’m always on vacation!” Gandhi joyfully replied. Of course Gandhi had more than his share of hard days, as does anyone who stands up for justice in an unjust world. But he also knew the distinctive joy of joining with others to do God’s work. So in this Lenten season, and beyond, may we all take on the joy that comes from doing what is right. And enjoy some chocolate chip cookies along the way.

Blessings,
Matthew+

What the Pond Teaches: Learning to Read Divine Speech

THE VERY REV. GIDEON L. K. POLLACH

Last spring, I discovered wood ducks nesting in a hollow stump at the edge of our parish pond. The tree had fallen years before in a storm—I had watched it topple, mourned its loss, even felt some guilt that we hadn’t gotten to it sooner. But here were these ducks, raising ducklings in what I had written off as wreckage. What looked like destruction had become habitat. What seemed like loss had become provision.

The pond hadn’t planned this. It was simply doing what it always does: finding ways to thrive, turning every available space toward life, making homes from ruins.



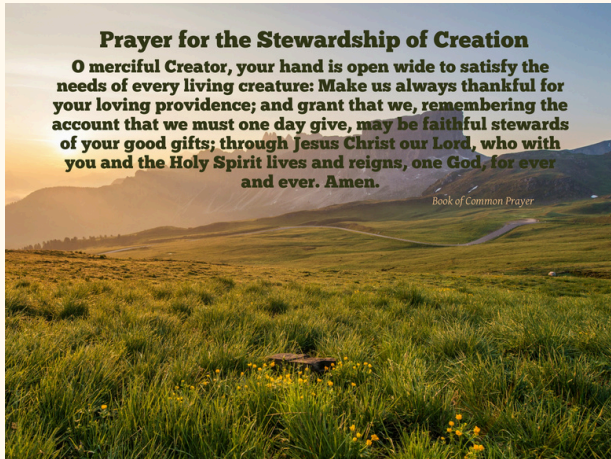
ABOVE: St. John’s Pond Preserve, tucked behind the Cold Spring Harbor Fish Hatchery, is home to some of Long Island’s oldest forests and a rare glimpse of returning river otters (retrieved from TripAdvisor)

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creationcare@dioceseli.org

[cont’d on pg. 5]

“Honoring God’s Creation During Lent”

BY IRENE ROSS



Prayer for the Stewardship of Creation, Book of Common Prayer, pg. 259

During Lent (February 18 to April 4), we deepen our spiritual growth and develop a stronger relationship with God by both fasting and feasting.

What better way to keep a Holy Lent than by honoring God’s beautiful creation?

Feasting: taking on additional activities

1. Read more scripture. The Old and New Testaments include references to God’s creation, starting with Genesis when we learn the origins of the Universe.

In Genesis 2:15, God commands Adam, the first man, to “work and take care of” the Garden of Eden.

2. Say extra prayers. Prayer for “Stewardship of Creation” appears on page 259 of the BCP. There are also prayers expressing gratitude and protection for the earth’s beauty.

3. Get involved in community events. Donate clean, gently used items to thrift shops, hold food drives, etc.

4. Create a Lent “Creation Calendar.” Include an intention or prayer for each of the 40 days. You can create this with MS Word or a ready-to-use template on user-friendly companies like Canva or Adobe Express.

Fasting to reduce carbon footprint

In the book, *Celebration of Discipline: the Path to Spiritual Growth*, author Richard J. Foster discusses the need for simplicity (Chapter 6) and explains the connection between inward reality and outward lifestyle.

Father Matthew Moore, Missioner of Environmental Justice, The Creation Care Community of the Diocese of Long Island, explained in a sermon a few years ago:

“We need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Unless they have been renewed, our minds are conformed to this world. This world, the world that tries to live without God, tells us that we, and not God, are at the center of the world.

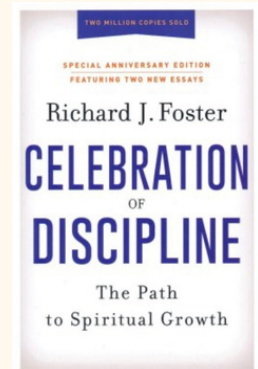
“And so we make war on one another, in a frantic scramble to get as much for ourselves as we can. And as a species we make war on the earth, recklessly plundering its bounty to meet our own insatiable desires for material comforts. But the earth does not have an infinite capacity to recover from the wounds we inflict on it.”

Some suggestions for you:

1. Eliminate plastics and encourage others to do so.
2. Lower energy consumption. Turn off lights, unplug electronics, use LED bulbs and optimize energy with smart appliances.



ABOVE: Lightbulbs illuminating our parish spaces.



RIGHT: *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster

3. Ride bikes more often. In some European countries, people use their bikes, not cars, to get to offices.
4. Eat locally grown fruit. Out-of-season produce involves a LOT of travel with gasoline and fuel.
5. Have meatless dinners. Father Matthew Moore once explained that our love of beef might seem innocent enough—but it can lead to deforestation, because of the clear-cutting to create pastures.
6. Minimize raking. Leaves hide food that wildlife needs to survive.
7. Save water by fixing leaks, taking shorter showers, not letting water run unnecessarily.

The takeaway

Psalm 24:1 reminds us that creation belongs to God, not us, and is not ours to exploit: “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”



Above: Biking to work in a European city
Photo by [Nhi Dam](#) on [Unsplash](#)

*What the Pond Teaches**[cont'd from pg. 3]*

Our congregation has been working together to restore our Mill Pond watershed for several years now—parishioners showing up for invasive pulls, planting natives, creating buffer zones, learning alongside me what it means to attend to this place. Their commitment has sharpened my observation. When you're removing phragmites alongside someone, when you're watching together as native grasses return, you start to notice patterns. There's an orientation toward thriving woven into creation itself. Life will make a way when there is no way. Even the Japanese knotweed we're constantly battling—that aggressive, invasive plant—is expressing the same relentless drive toward flourishing.



ABOVE: St. John's Episcopal Church, Cold Spring Harbor
Photo: Jim Henderson, Wikimedia Commons

This is more than biology. I've come to see it as divine speech—not the written word of Scripture alone, but an unwritten language that's been speaking since the beginning. The same creative energy that has been trying, iterating, experimenting through four billion years of evolution is at work in our watershed. Evolution isn't just history we study; it's the visible grammar of divine creativity that refuses to be defeated.

Watch any ecosystem long enough and you'll see it: the sudden outbursts of life after disturbance, the way forests regrow from stumps, the healing that happens almost by accident as the system moves back toward wholeness—not because it's trying to heal, but because it's trying to thrive, and



ABOVE: St. John's Lower Pond, Cold Spring Harbor
Photo by Jim Henderson, Wikimedia Commons

thriving is healing. This pattern persists through ice ages and mass extinctions, keeps finding new pathways, new forms, new possibilities. And on Easter morning, that pattern—woven into every cell, every gene, every ecosystem—became a person. The drive toward thriving walked out of the tomb.



LEFT: St. John's Upper Pond, Cold Spring Harbor
Photo: Jim Henderson, Wikimedia Commons

This is why I've started writing weekly theological reflections for our congregation called Sunday Reflections: What the Pond Can Teach Us—invitations to learn to read this unwritten language, to recognize where the drive toward flourishing is at work, to see restoration efforts as participation in the fundamental work God has been doing since the beginning.

When we pull invasive plants and plant natives, we're not managing creation like stewards overseeing property. We're more like midwives—attending to something that's already trying to be born, removing obstacles, creating conditions for what wants to happen anyway. The pond teaches us this kind of patient, attentive partnership with processes larger than ourselves.

Creation is patient. It will teach anyone willing to watch and listen—whether you have a pond or a window box, a forest or a single street tree. But here's what most of us don't realize: we all live in a watershed, even if we've never thought about it. Every place on earth is part of a drainage system. Water flows from your roof, your street, your yard into streams you may never see, connecting you to neighbors upstream and down, to species you've never met, to an entire network of relationships you didn't know you were part of.

When we begin to ask "What watershed am I in?"—when we learn its name, trace its boundaries, discover what lives there—we're not just learning geography. We're finding our place in the grammar of divine cosmogenesis, discovering how we're woven into the creative work that's been unfolding since the formation of stars. The interconnectedness isn't metaphor; it's hydrology, ecology, the actual flow of water and nutrients and life through the place you call home.

And here's the invitation: we can choose to partner in creation's purposeful redemption right where we are. Start by learning your watershed's name. Ask: What stream does my water drain into? What species depend on it? What's thriving and what's struggling? When we remove obstacles to flourishing in our own small piece of the web—planting natives, reducing runoff, protecting what remains—we're joining the healing work God has been doing all along. We're becoming conscious participants in what creation knows unconsciously: that we are woven together, that our choices ripple through systems we can't see, and that death—any death, every death—is not the final word.

The Very Rev. Gideon L.K. Pollach is Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Cold Spring Harbor, where he founded the St. John's Pond Watershed Alliance. To explore watershed engagement as spiritual practice, contact gideon@stjcsh.org or subscribe to "Sunday Reflections: What the Pond Teaches Us" wherever you listen to podcasts.

Why Does the Diocese of Long Island Fight for Earth?

BY RITA ANN GRIFFITH



Our 2026 Earth Day celebration will be held on April 25th at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, coinciding with the launch of the new Gaia exhibition, featuring a breathtaking 20-foot model of Earth. What better way to honor Earth Day than to gather beneath the Earth itself, in a place of prayer?

As in 2025, our theme remains "Fight for Earth". The fight must be fiercer than ever, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned in January, Countries, communities, and individuals must act urgently if we are to save "this fragile earth, our island home," as we say in Eucharistic Prayer C.

Why "Fight for Earth"? As Episcopalians, our Baptismal Covenant calls us to "renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God." We do not deny the science of human-driven climate change, nor the evidence we see across our Diocese—from Brooklyn Bridge to Montauk Point. Rising seas, floods, droughts, hurricanes, and ice storms have already shattered our region. We remember Hurricane Sandy's devastation, which claimed lives and damaged farms, homes, and houses of worship alike.

Last year, the world passed the 1.5° global warming threshold. SG Guterres reminds us it is not irreversible—if we cut fossil fuels, transition to clean power, reduce emissions, and halt deforestation. Yet here in the U.S., environmental protections are being rolled back, drilling is expanding, and renewable energy projects halted. We cannot remain silent while the powers-that-be accelerate planetary destruction.

Is this too political? We cannot let the fear of seeming political deter us from standing up to defend the planet and God's creatures who live on it.

So we urge you: show up and speak out. March, protest, support and join organizations like GreenFaith, NY Renew, Beyond Plastics, Save the Great South Bay, or ReWild Long Island. Write your Senators and Congresspersons. Let them know you care about laws that protect—or harm—our planet.

And join us on April 25th for our Earth Day celebration and call to action. Together, let us Fight for Earth.

Onward, Christian soldiers for Earth!



ABOVE: Gaia exhibit in Truro Cathedral. Photo from Wikimedia Commons



ABOVE: Climate protesters in New York, 2019. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.

Earth Day Celebration

April 25, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Cathedral of the Incarnation/Mercer School
65 Fourth Street, Garden City, NY

Bishop Provenzano and the Creation Care Community of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island will host a **"Fight for Earth" Day Celebration** in conjunction with the Cathedral of the Incarnation's Gaia exhibit.

Schedule

- Choral Liturgy with Bishop Provenzano – 11:00. a.m.
- Lunch
- Afternoon Festival (1:00pm – 3:30pm)
 - Rogation procession with clergy
 - Visit to the Cathedral's bees and beekeeping demo
 - Foam-free flower arranging demonstration
 - Craft for kids
 - Gardening and planting demonstrations
 - Repair and rebuild workshops

Registration is free.

For more information, contact the Creation Care Team at creationcare@dioceseli.org.

Prayer for Creation and Renewal



The Church of England
 Morning Prayer on Tuesday
 Tuesday, 10 February 2026
 Scholastica, sister of Benedict,
 Abbess of Plombariola, c.543 [Commemoration]



*Blessed are you, creator of all,
 to you be praise and glory for ever.
 As your dawn renews the face of the earth
 bringing light and life to all creation,
 may we rejoice in this day you have made;
 as we wake refreshed from the depths of sleep,
 open our eyes to behold your presence
 and strengthen our hands to do your will,
 that the world may rejoice and give you praise.
 Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 Blessed be God for ever.*

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