

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND CREATION CARE COMMUNITY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



ABOVE: Deacon Susan Ellinghaus holds the cross for the rogation procession on "Fight for Earth" Day at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, with the "Gaia" exhibit as an appropriate backdrop, April 25, 2026
Photo: Girl in a Camera Productions © Diocese of Long Island

IN THIS ISSUE:

MESSAGE FROM THE MISSIONER - PG. 1

WHEN YOU TRULY SEE - PG. 1

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES - PG. 2

LITURGICAL RESOURCES - PG. 3

GAIA: THE POSSIBILITIES OF PEACE - PG. 4

PLUGGING IN TO THE SUN - PG. 5

"FIGHT FOR EARTH" DAY PHOTOS - PG. 6

"Fight for Earth" Day: "When you truly see, you cannot remain unchanged"



BY IRENE ROSS

"When you change people, that is how the world is healed." So said guest speaker and Chief of Mission Program for The Episcopal Church the Rev. Lester Mackenzie at last month's "Fight for Earth" Day event at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, hosted by the Creation Care Community of the Diocese of Long Island.

Mackenzie spoke under the Gaia exhibit that signifies Mother Earth. He began by singing in Swahili: "Tembea, tembea, Baba, tembea, tukuone." Loosely translated, the words mean "move, move, move God -and let us see you." He continued: "Keep going! Keep saying yes. Yebo. Keep seeing. And I thank Creation Care for showing up, when it's sometimes costly to show up."



Message from the Missioner for Environmental Justice

BY THE REV. DR. MATTHEW MOORE

"Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs." I have never been so moved by these lines from St. Francis's "Canticle of the Sun" as I was when we said them together at this year's Earth Day observance, with Gaia, the model of the earth suspended from the Cathedral ceiling, casting its gentle light over the congregation. Pope Francis opens his profound meditation on ecojustice with the opening words of St. Francis's poem—Laudato si' (Praised be You)—which also served as the title of his encyclical. But the Pope's echo of his namesake's praise is immediately followed by a lament: "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her."

[cont'd on pg. 2]



The Rev. Lester Mackenzie preaches at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, Garden City, L.I., April 25, 2026
Photo: Girl in a Camera Productions © Diocese of Long Island

Here are four takeaways from his homily, as well as the lively discussions that took place over the weekend.

1. Fight—not with anger, but rooted in love.

"I grew up in South Africa in the crucible of Apartheid," he said, "and I quickly learned the difference between 'fighting against,' which consumes you, which hardens and hollows you and 'fighting for,' which sustains you, which connects you and keeps you rooted in love."

[cont'd on pg. 5]

Message from the Missioner, cont'd

The Cathedral's title for the Gaia exhibit comes from one of our Eucharistic prayers: "this fragile earth, our island home." The fragility of our island home is ever more in evidence, as the powers that be tear up one environmental protection after another. In the latest manifestation of the growing pessimism of climate scientists, researchers now fear that, as a result of our addiction to fossil fuels, the AMOC (Atlantic meridional overturning circulation) may slow down so dramatically by the end of the century that eventual collapse would be all but certain. The collapse of the AMOC would have a devastating effect on the climate system, with what The Guardian describes as "catastrophic consequences for Europe, Africa and the Americas."

This year's Eucharistic lectionary is taking us through Matthew's gospel. Matthew's theology is shaped by the opposition between God's reign of justice and peace, proclaimed and embodied by Jesus, and "the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God," the powers we renounce in our baptismal promises. We see those evil powers at work in the ravaging of our sister Mother Earth, and in our indifference to the suffering of the poor, who are the first to bear the brunt of the worst consequences of environmental degradation.

Matthew's gospel forces us to answer the question of the old protest song: "Which side are you on?" Jesus continues to suffer in solidarity with the poor, and with the natural world, which Elizabeth Johnson has called the "new poor" of our industrial age. According to Matthew 25, when we stand before the great judgment seat of Christ, we can expect to be asked how we responded when we met Jesus in the hungry, the thirsty, and the imprisoned. And we can also expect to be asked how we responded when we met Jesus in the whales choked with plastic waste, and the rainforests set ablaze to make way for cattle ranches.

Which side are we on? If we are on God's side, we must also be on the side of our sister Mother Earth. In this Pentecost season may the Holy Spirit open our ears to hear her crying out, and empower us to answer her cry.

Blessings,
Matthew+



The Rt. Rev. Lawrence C. Provenzano, Bishop of Long Island, with the native serviceberry tree planted in his honor in the grounds of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, April 25, 2026
Photo: Girl in a Camera Productions © Diocese of Long Island

The struggle continues for "this fragile Earth, our island home"

BY RITA ANN GRIFFITH



ABOVE: Congregation at "Fight for Earth" Day celebration at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, April 25, 2026. Photo: Girl in A Camera Productions © Diocese of Long Island

On April 25, we had a glorious celebration of Earth Day at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, under their magnificent Gaia installation. Two days later, a New York Times article said the current EPA administration has gutted the agency's science research department, firing some 1,500 scientists. This follows other devastating rollbacks on environmental action in the USA. The administration has frozen green investments, pulled out of the Paris Climate Accords, cancelled wind farms, ended the financial incentives to go solar, and is pushing for more rather than less use of fossil fuels.

This is why for the last two years our theme for Earth Day has been "Fight for Earth." As the late President of Mozambique Samora Machel used to say, "A luta continua" – the struggle continues.

Our Eucharistic Prayer C states: "At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and *this fragile earth, our island home*." Episcopalians believe that God created the world and called it good. We know that we humans are destroying it, so we have a responsibility to try to fix it. But when there is so much real power stacked against us, it is hard to know what to do.

Jesus said: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple." – Luke 14:26 "Hate" here means "to detach oneself from." Jesus warns: to follow me, you must be ready to turn away from all you hold dear and commit yourself to me.

The message is the same when it comes to fighting for Earth. As Christians, we may have to detach ourselves from Earth-destructive people, policies and directions – even our own country – and commit ourselves to the struggle.

[cont'd on pg. 3]



Liturgical Resources for the Season



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

The long, green growing season in the northern hemisphere is meant for us – to grow food, and to “...grow up in every way” into Christ, into the shape of the space of the Jesus-temple.

The Church calendar receives the particular gift of the Spirit at Pentecost and then spends months living into this promise, following the guidance of that living prayer in us, the Spirit that prays in us “...with sighs too deep for words.”

This same Spirit breathed across the waters of the formless void in the creative soup of primordial time-before-time. This Spirit breathes in us, and enlivens all of creation. This Spirit brings us all to fullness of life – life abundant! – in the fullness of time. Which is to say: in God.

How might we receive the gift of summer, here on Long Island, city and suburb and exurb and vineyard and dune? Receive this gift now, so that we may blossom and become bread for the world and healing leaves on the Tree of Life, healing for all the nations, for all creation?

Looking for [some children's ideas](#)? Or perhaps a [summer camp](#) for inspiration? Check out [Creation Justice's](#) resources.

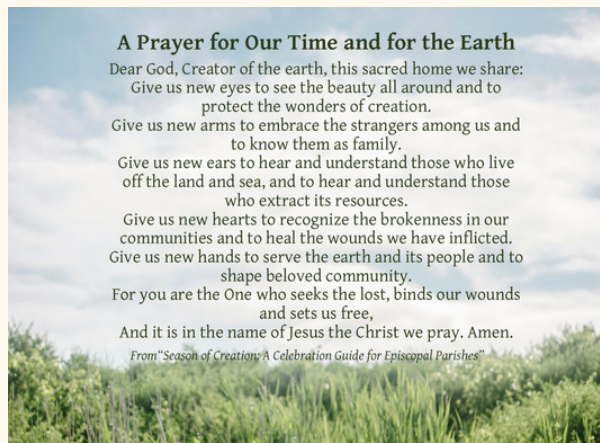
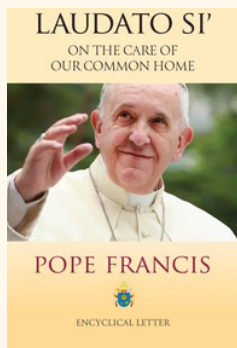
Or use the summer to have a common read – some intersection of racial justice and environmental justice and healing? Or use sections from Pope Francis's profound encyclical *Laudato Si'* (“Praised be you, my Lord”) for an adult framing of ecological theology and thinking.

The culmination of this growing-into season takes a couple forms in the autumn. The growth contains the harvest within itself.

The [Season of Creation](#) in September aligns our work-in-Christ as healing work for the life of all creatures of God. There are many resources, for liturgy and formation opportunities, community-building and thanksgiving. Check out eucharistic lectionary-based liturgical resources (look for Year A) for your September planning. Beautiful readings for the Sunday assembly! Slight (approved!) changes to words of corporate confession that reveal our relationship to the rest of creation as being in need of healing!

The Episcopal Church's [own resources for Season of Creation](#) offer much for the whole year – summer growing-into-Christ season included.

May we all grow up in every way into the shape of the One who gives life to all creation.



ABOVE: Prayer from “[Season of Creation: A Celebration Guide for Episcopal Parishes](#)”

BELOW: Sunrise over Montauk, the eastern end of the Diocese of Long Island
Photo: Michael Savidge, Wikimedia Commons



The struggle continues for “this fragile earth”

[cont'd from pg. 2]

Feminist writer and poet Audre Lorde said:

“To refuse to participate in the shaping our future is to give it up. Do not be misled into passivity either by false security (they don't mean me) or by despair (there's nothing we can do). Each of us must find our work and do it. Militancy no longer means guns at high noon, if it ever did. It means actively working for change, sometimes in the absence of any surety that change is coming.”

For the sake of *this fragile earth*, we have to turn away from those who deny the science of climate change and environmental degradation. Our Christian imperative requires us to speak truthfully and act boldly, even with friends, family and the powerful.

Doing the right thing also includes what we can individually, such as reducing our own consumption, cutting out the use of things harmful to the environment, detaching from our [“lust of possession.”](#)

We can also write and telephone Albany and Washington; march; get involved with environmental groups in [Brooklyn](#), [Queens](#), [Nassau and Suffolk](#); and keep ourselves informed through organizations like [GreenFaith](#).

Victory is not guaranteed, but “...let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” – Galatians 6:9

Gaia: Exploring the Possibilities of Peace

BASED ON A PRESENTATION BY ADELPHI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



Photo courtesy of Prof. K. Laatikainen

On **“Fight for Earth” Day**, while Gaia rotated overhead in the Cathedral of the Incarnation, each revolution bringing into focus the now infamous Strait of Hormuz, International Relations students from Adelphi University gave a presentation on the possibilities of peace.

Taking the Iran War as a point of departure, they showed the interconnected dimensions of the political and the economic which can shape lasting peace. Wars destroy communities, infrastructure and livelihoods, bringing displacement and fear. Peace brings environmental stability and the hope that Gaia will continue.

Change is Possible

How do we get from war to peace, from environmental degradation to wholeness? The answers include investing in education, infrastructure and community development to create pathways out of poverty and conflict. Working together is also crucial.

The group looked at the Sustainable Development Goals, and pointed to organizations working under the climate-related Goals.



SDG 13 – Climate Action

Currently 3.6 billion people live in areas highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Carbon emissions have risen sharply over time, warming the planet. In 2024, global temperatures hit an all-time high, exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Organizations of note include:

- **SustainUS**, which focuses on youth leadership. It mobilizes young people across the United States to advance climate justice through advocacy, leadership training, and civic engagement.
- The **Navdanya Initiative** has conserved over 5,000 varieties of rice, wheat, and other crops through a network of community seed banks across India which freely share indigenous seed. They work against crop monocultures and oppose agribusinesses which create farmer dependency through terminator seeds and licensing.

SDG 14 – Life below water

Sea levels have been steadily rising as a result of warming temperatures and ice loss in polar regions. The ocean produces half of the world's oxygen, soaks up 30% of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activity, and absorbs 90% of the excess heat those emissions generate.

Some organizations:

- **Surfrider Foundation** campaigns for clean water policies and stronger laws that defend oceans from harmful pollution. Volunteers remove plastic waste from coastlines, protecting wildlife habitats and keeping beaches clean.
- **The Ocean Cleanup** aims to develop and scale technologies to rid the oceans of plastic, with the goal of removing 90% by 2040. It has already removed over 50 million kilograms of trash from rivers and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The Ocean Cleanup also targets river interception systems because the 1,000 most polluting rivers are responsible for 80% of global plastic emissions.



Photo courtesy of Prof. K. Laatikainen

SDG 15: Life on Land

Around 500 million people live in regions affected by desertification, which are especially vulnerable to extreme weather events such as droughts, heatwaves, and dust storms. When ecosystems are damaged, they release carbon rather than absorbing it. Parts of the Amazon rainforest now emit more CO₂ than they store, largely due to deforestation.

Organizations working in this area include:

- **The Green Belt Movement** recognized the link between environmental degradation, poverty, and disempowerment, especially targeting women, while emphasizing how restoring ecosystems could also improve livelihoods, health, and community resilience. It combats deforestation, soil erosion and desertification.
- **Green Initiative** for a Carbon Neutral Planet aims to accelerate the global transition to net-zero emissions and nature-positive impact through sustainable innovation, environmental leadership and long-term climate action. It provides climate certification, carbon footprint management, nature-positive action strategies, travel emissions calculators, and tourism sustainability solutions that help organizations reduce environmental impact.



Plugging In to the Sun: Solar from the Balcony

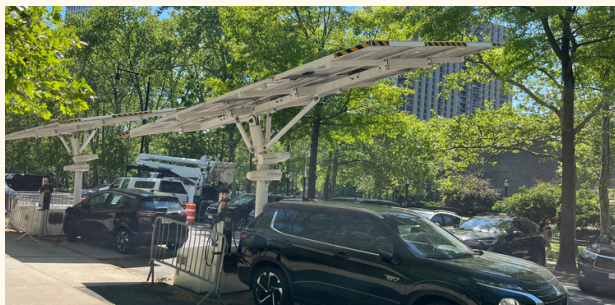
BY BENJAMIN SPIER



Rooftop solar array in Brooklyn. Photo: © Benjamin Spier

In my corner of New York City the solar revolution has arrived. Even before the Middle Eastern energy shock refocused public attention on renewables, I could see photovoltaic panels sprouting up on apartment high-rises, individual homes, and even a church or two in Brooklyn and Queens. Feeling hopeful, I asked the leadership of my historic landmark church, could we install a solar array on our parish hall? Not feasible, I was told. Retrofitting a century-old structure in a historic district would not only require a new roof but also run afoul of the city's onerous landmarking regulations. So much for the promise of abundant, clean, cheap energy.

Now, however, there is a solar solution at hand not only for the owners of historic structures but for millions of apartment renters who don't own a roof. Balcony, or plug-in, solar consists of small panels that can be installed on a balcony, as the name implies, or in a yard—or even hung from a window. The technology is relatively inexpensive, ranging from as little as \$300 to a few thousand dollars versus \$20,000 and up for a rooftop array. It is also much simpler and less time-consuming to install: a balcony solar panel can be plugged in to a home electrical outlet without the extensive rewiring required for rooftop solar. And in an era of soaring inflation, advocates like green-energy nonprofit Bright Saver point out that plug-in solar panels can shave up to 20% off utility bills.



Mobile solar EV charger in Downtown Brooklyn
Photo © Benjamin Spier

Not surprisingly, plug-in solar has taken off in Europe and is on its way to widespread adoption across the US. Here at home, the Solar Up Now New York (SUNNY) Act to authorize plug-in solar has unanimously passed the State Senate and, as of this writing, is making its way through the Assembly. Yet even as passage looks likely, there are regulatory hurdles and safety concerns. According to a report in Newsday, Con Edison has endorsed SUNNY but Long Island's LIPA and PSEG have urged caution: too much power from plug-in panels may overheat home wires, and the devices could shock users if they are turned on without the prongs being fully plugged in. Also the state fire prevention and building codes will need to be updated to accommodate the new technology.

With those issues still to be resolved, it may be a while before plug-in solar makes its way into New Yorkers' homes. Nonetheless, the bipartisan consensus around this technology holds out hope of a win-win for consumers' wallets and for the planet. In the words of the old hippie anthem from Hair, let the sun shine in.

When you truly see [cont'd from pg. 1]

2. Environmental suffering and degradation is often a form of social injustice.

It affects the most vulnerable communities. Creation Care gives natural value of the right to exist to everyone, whether human or nonhuman.

3. Ask what the gospel expects of you.

Mackenzie points to the Bible, where several verses in Isaiah state that God is the creator of earth. Isaiah 65:17 promises that God will create "new heavens and a new earth," signaling a future renewed creation where former sufferings are forgotten.

"Creation Care is longing for the children of God to show up and act. That is YOU."

"Often, however, the news is dark, and the obstacles seem to be never-ending. I think about Mary and the resurrection. She went to the tomb when it was still dark. She didn't wait for certainty or for the grief to pass. She didn't wait for someone else to go first. And SHE was the first to see the resurrection."

4. Ask yourself: How much discomfort am I willing to tolerate to fight for creation?

As someone pointed out, this country has a consumer mentality and we lust for possessions.

"What is one thing you are willing to risk to help your neighbor?" Mackenzie asked. "For me, I turn off wifi and electricity for one hour in the evening. Whew! Is that hard! I need to stream my Apple TV! I need to drive my car because it's more convenient."

About Fr. Lester Mackenzie

Fr. Lester Mackenzie, former rector of St. Mary's in Laguna Beach, CA, was appointed in 2024 by The Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop the Most Rev. Sean Rowe as Chief of Mission Program for The Episcopal Church. As such, he strategizes, coordinates and builds capacity for ministries of racial reconciliation, creation care, formation, evangelism and other key mission priorities.

“FIGHT FOR EARTH” DAY – A JOYFUL CELEBRATION

Photos: Girl in a Camera Productions © Diocese of Long Island

