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CREATION CARE COMMUNITY

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE:

RECONCILIATION, RACISM, REPAIR, AND THE ENVIRONMENT – **PG. 1**
FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE – **PG. 2**
MESSAGE FROM THE MISSIONER – **PG. 3**
"COME AND SAVE US!" – **PG. 3**
REFLECTING ON HARVEST – **PG. 4**
A LANDFILL, AN AQUIFER, AND THE PINE BARRENS – **PG. 5**
THANKSGIVING FOR THE EARTH – **PG. 6**



Christmas Eve 2025, Cathedral of the Incarnation, Garden City, LI.
Photo © Cathedral of the Incarnation

Reconciliation, Racism, Repair, and the Environment



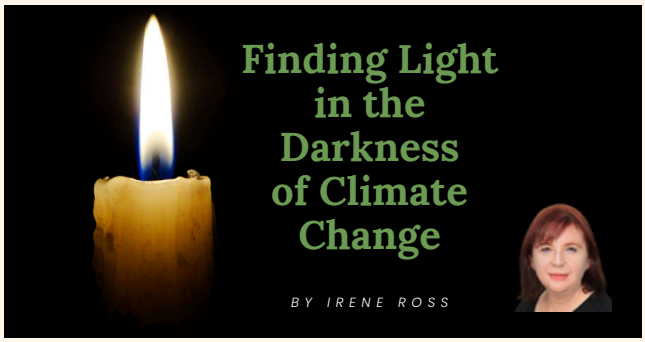
BY THE RT. REV. ADAM J. SHOEMAKER, D.MIN.
BISHOP OF LONG ISLAND

My years as a priest serving in Charleston, South Carolina, taught me a great deal about the intersectionality of racism and of our Christian call to care for God's creation. Charleston's low-lying landscape makes it extremely vulnerable to rising sea waters and ever-powerful weather events such as hurricanes. My justice work in the city taught me, time and again, that it is the Black and Brown communities who are presently most impacted by the ravages of climate change.

The Charleston Area Justice Ministry (or CAJM), an organization I once led as President, is a coalition of different faith communities focused on a range of social ills, and the intersectionality of the reparative call of both racial inequity and creation care revealed itself to us on a number of occasions. Environmental matters are all too often seen in justice spaces as a white person's issue. It often does not seem to rise to the same level of urgency as things such as affordable housing, equal access to health care, good public schools, or fair treatment in policing practices, and yet, creation care eventually became an agreed-upon priority for CAJM.

The degradation of Charleston's coastlines and rising floodwaters greatly threaten historic African American neighborhoods of the city such as the East Side of the downtown Peninsula. CAJM's work repeatedly demonstrated these impacts came as the result of

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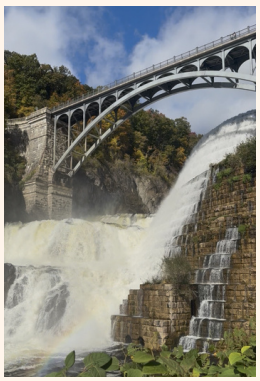
I grew up in Upstate New York during an era when severe ice storms were a regular winter fixture. As a child, I was captivated by the aftermath, watching tree branches twinkle under heavy ice, looking as though they were kissing the sky. My youth was defined by these vivid outdoor experiences: jumping into massive leaf piles, playing "King of the Mountain" on towering snowbanks, and watching pond bullfrogs.

Most of all, I remember the proliferation of earthworms that surfaced after a heavy rain. When I was about seven or eight years old, I carefully fashioned a suburban "development" for them, building tiny log cabins out of mud and twigs. Never mind the fact that they would inevitably burrow back into the soil—in my young mind, I was providing God's creatures with proper homes.



Earthworm on ground in Durham, North Carolina. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

These memories resurfaced during a conversation with a friend who is a student teacher. We discussed how modern children are often deprived of tactile, real-world tools for learning. While my childhood activities were fun—and they certainly added to my socialization—they also taught me a fundamental truth: All living beings play a vital role in our ecosystem. They activated an early sense of scientific imagination and a deep reverence for creation.





Fall foliage at the base of New Croton Dam, Croton Gorge Park in Cortlandt, New York, owned and operated by Westchester County. Photo: Citrine Glenn

***Reconciliation, Racism, Repair, and the Environment* [cont'd from pg. 1]**

neglect by public officials in favor of the whiter parts of the city. There was clear evidence of racial disparities in how the ravages of climate change were managed by local government.

We don't typically associate the work of repair in the public square as having anything to do with the environment, but environmental racism is real and will increasingly become a more urgent matter. Rising sea waters, hotter summers, and more unpredictable and ever-powerful storms will threaten us all, but the danger will often be first felt by communities of color. I believe a reparative lens that includes this intersectionality is critically important for us to consider as members of God's church in the world.

The *Book of Common Prayer* teaches us that the mission of the church is one of reconciliation, and this reconciling work is not possible without prayerfully considering the rising effects of environmental racism.

As members of the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, we serve communities that are just as vulnerable to environmental threats as the community I once served in Charleston. I believe it is important that we not only educate ourselves on an issue such as environmental racism in matters of creation care but also advocate for policies that provide more equitable ways to address climate change.

My hope, as bishop of the diocese, is that we might increasingly find ways to connect our racial justice work with our environmental justice work and bring a reparative lens to the way we do ministry together. Our call to care for the creation God has given us to steward and our call to strive for reconciliation amongst all people are inextricably linked. Our collective future may depend upon our ability to open our hearts to this intersectionality and deep interconnectedness.

***Finding Light in the Darkness of Climate Change* [cont'd]**

The Intersection of Grief and Gratitude

As we confront climate change, we often grapple with an overwhelming sense of loss. Rev. Alison Cornish, Coordinator of the Chaplaincy Initiative at the BTS Center, notes that grief is directly related to gratitude. "Mourning what is lost can actually awaken a deeper appreciation for what we still have," she says. "By taking a breath and intentionally enjoying the vegetation, nature's creatures, the sun, the sky, and the water, we can practice a form of sacred mindfulness that honors the Creator."

Still, the mental weight of environmental degradation heavily impacts the next generation. Carly Dober, a psychotherapist, shares profound concerns about the climate anxiety and grief settling into the hearts and minds of young people.

[cont'd on pg. 3]



Message from the Missioner of Environmental Justice

BY THE REV. DR. MATTHEW MOORE

If you waste much time on social media, you have probably run across a post that goes something like this: "We Baby Boomers rode our bikes on the freeway without helmets, sprinkled ground glass on our cornflakes, and got a sound beating from our parents every time we looked at them sideways. But kids today want everything handed to them, they never move out of the house, and they think that the world owes them a participation trophy just for showing up." I'm singling out the Boomers, my own generation, here because we started this nonsense. If Gen X and the Millennials have also chimed in, it's because we Boomers did it to them first.

This finger-wagging at Gen Z is particularly rich, coming from us Boomers, because as one astute youth pointed out, the Boomers were awarded the ultimate participation trophy: the postwar American economy. We could afford to move out of the house and start families, because jobs were relatively plentiful and tuition at top state colleges was not nearly as prohibitive as it is today. (I studied at one of the best, for less than $800 a year.)

As a college professor who spends many of his waking hours with members of this much-maligned generation, I can say from firsthand experience that young people today are no less intelligent and hardworking than we were. And if anything I would say that they are substantially less spoiled. If they have a hard time moving out of the house, it's not because they're lazy, and it's not because they're any more dependent on their parents than we were. It's because the job market is much more difficult than anything we ever faced. And if many of them are hesitant to start their own families, it's because they recognize that the world we have bequeathed them is rapidly warming, and that by the time their children reach adulthood the earth may be much less habitable than it is today.

In recent weeks, the young people of France have taken to the streets to decry the shameful conditions in their schools. Let's not take the easy way out, and deplore the resort to violence without asking ourselves what gave rise to the violence in the first place. If we would listen to our young people, if we would live up to our responsibility to leave them a world worth living in, it would never occur to them to take to the streets.

In these dark times I keep coming back to the life and witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who remained faithful even through a still darker time. Toward the end of his life Bonhoeffer wrote, "The ultimately responsible question is not how I extricate myself heroically from a situation, but how a coming generation is to go on living." I will be carrying his words in my heart, along with all coming generations, as I embrace the penitential side of this Advent season.

Blessings,

Matthew+

Finding Light in the Darkness of Climate Change

[cont'd from pg. 2]

The Rev. Lilo Carr Rivera, priest associate of the family and youth ministry at St. Peter's-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, noted that a landmark 2021 global investigation of climate anxiety in youth revealed staggering statistics. The study showed that youth across all countries are deeply worried about climate change: 59% were very or extremely worried, and 84% were at least moderately worried.

Cultivating Hope in Community

Faced with these numbers, faith communities are stepping in to offer a different narrative. Mother Lilo shared that this past August, the church's Vacation Bible School focused heavily on creation.

The children explored their role as stewards of the earth. "We framed the problem in such a way that promotes hope, which prevents a paralyzing collapse into cynicism, apathy, or despair," Mother Lilo explained. "The spiritual and emotional resources provided by Scripture and the religious community are natural and powerful places where this reframing can occur."



Brooklyn Bridge Park. Photo: © Benjamin Spier



"Come and save us!"

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



Advent is upon us!

Yes, old Advent actually began right after All Saints, so it really is upon us! But, you still have time to plan a "greener" Advent and Christmas celebration for your community. Or, look all the way ahead to Candlemas, and ask blessing on the bees!

Advent is a season that asks how to live faithfully "in the meanwhile." It is always the meanwhile of our life together; we are always becoming more of the beloved community, all creatures of God, through the grace of repentance and struggle and the grace of insight and wisdom.

As Bishop Adam writes (elsewhere in this issue), and as we have long held, the work of "eco-justice" emphatically encompasses the other-than-human creation and the asking of what justice for our human neighbors looks like. Cornel West writes that "justice is what love looks like in public." The public sphere is

[cont'd on pg. 4]



Reflecting on Harvest

BY RITA GRIFFITH



Harvest Altar, Church of the Transfiguration, Freeport. © Rita Griffith.

Harvest is not a feast of the Episcopal Church, but I'm sure many of us from elsewhere in Anglicanism have happy memories of the annual Harvest Festival—and of Sir John Betjeman's hilarious "Diary of a Church Mouse"! My parish in Freeport, Diocese of Long Island, continues the Harvest tradition, celebrating in Thanksgiving week.

Harvest roots us in the agrarian world, reminding us of our dependence on the earth. The gifts on the altar are produced by fields, farms, trees, orchards, nurseries—or backyard gardens.

The fruits of the earth further reflect our dependence on God. We cannot manufacture them ourselves, no matter how advanced or sophisticated our processes. We can tend the soil, but we can't make the seed, the shoot, the vine. So when we get a good crop, we Christians see God's graciousness behind the abundance.

Harvest is more than acknowledgement of dependence, thanksgiving, and gratitude. It is also a means of generosity. We give back from what we receive so others can share in God's bounty. When people are hungry, we can't just pray for them; we must also give them something to eat. We share the physical gifts we have been given, as well as the spiritual, imperishable ones, of kindness, love, joy, peace.

There is a 120-year-old mango tree near Lucknow, India on which a farmer, Kaleem Ullah Khan, has grafted over 300 varieties of mangoes. The tree is an orchard in itself, he says. Khan gives its fruits freely to all. Asked how he protects it from birds and insects, he replied: "I don't scare them away. Nature's bounty is for everyone to share."



A close-up of a bulbul bird on a mango tree. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

***"Come and Save Us!"* [cont'd from pg. 3]**

literally "the environment": our shared common home. It is no surprise that the human poor around the world and right here in New York bear the brunt of climate crises, shouldering the debt of greed in drought and heat just as "the poor" are required to bear the guilt of the greedy in all things.

To say, "Come, Lord Jesus!" ("Maranatha!") is to say: Lord, come and judge us with the weight and vision of your love. Realign us.

Perhaps this Advent is a time to orient the Prayers of the People toward our human longing to align with God's longing - God's dream - of fullness of life for all creatures, human and other-than-human? Perhaps this Advent might see a recommitment to act with justice, to love kindness and mercy, and to walk humbly before God, with God, within God? Perhaps a simple liturgical shift in tone would open up the space within our hearts? Eco-justice need not compel a complete liturgical revision, or a long collect or litany in unfamiliar language.

We can ask the simple question: Do our liturgies help us understand our own longing for God's Advent among us as bringing fullness of life and healing for all creatures of God? If not, why not?

Tom Mousin, a recently retired priest in Maine, annually makes an Advent calendar you can put on your refrigerator. Each day has a brief Bible verse and a very brief exhortation/task ("see the light!" "prepare a place!"). Old and young alike can use it. Its simplicity lets it be a great vehicle for what I describe above: take something basic and Advent-y and ask: when we think of the Lord coming "to us," who and what is included in the "us"? Maranatha! Hosanna! Come, Lord, and save us from ourselves. Daily.

Reflecting on Harvest [cont'd]

Along with gratitude and generosity, I believe harvest should also impel us to care for creation. In our Prayers of the People, we pray "for the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it." What are we doing to ensure that this one Earth that we all inhabit, which at creation God called "very good," can continue to produce abundant and sufficient harvests for those who come after us?

We have collectively done a very poor job so far. Instead of being grateful and generous stewards of the earth, we have been its exploiters. All around us, we see the results. From extreme weather due to man-made climate change —floods, hurricanes, heat waves—to the mass extinction of many species; loss of biodiversity; the oceans choked with our garbage; our children afflicted with pollution-induced asthma; even countries and coastal communities at risk of disappearing because of rising sea levels.

We have to do better. Let's seriously think about replanting trees; expanding our use of renewable energy; consuming less; cutting down our use of disposables, especially plastics. In caring for the earth we Christians, as the harvest hymn says, "wholesome grain and pure may be."

A Landfill, an Aquifer, and the Pine Barrens

(Part 1)

BY GLORIA PELÁEZ SHEA



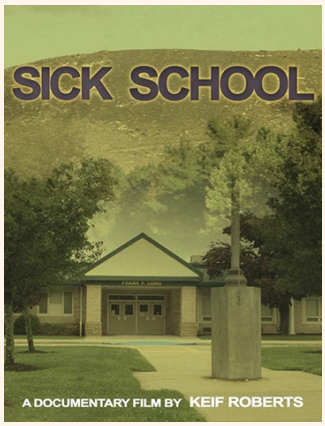
When I moved to Suffolk County six years ago I was ignorant of the Town of Brookhaven Landfill (TBL) until a *Newsday* headline in March 2026: "*Brookhaven landfill: Town seeks a 5-year operating extension, drawing residents' ire.*" The website of the Brookhaven Landfill Action Remediation Group (BLARG), a grassroots environmental justice group in North Bellport, educated me.

Briefly:

- TBL is a huge landfill which opened in 1974 with six cells and accepted municipal waste.
- Five of the cells have closed; one is still active.
- Leachate from TBL (formed when rain falls on the waste) has caused environmental harm, reaching the surrounding water sources, causing contamination and affecting the aquifer.
- There are demonstrated negative health effects on the communities closest to TBL, especially North Bellport.
- Multiple extensions were granted to keep TBL open.
- Latest closure dates are 2028 or 2031.

TBL is tremendously lucrative to the Town of Brookhaven, but poses serious threats to the community of North Bellport, which is closest; the Long Island Pine Barrens; and the aquifer system.





LEFT: Google map of Brookhaven Landfill and surrounding communities. Source: WSHU Public Radio.
RIGHT: Poster for "Sick School" (2019). Source: IMDb.

The Landfill and North Bellport

The Village of Bellport is approximately 90% White. The Village of Bellport and North Bellport share one zip code and one post office. However, the residents who live closest to the landfill, in North Bellport, for the most part Black, Latinx, and indigenous people, are the ones directly affected by the cumulative impacts of the landfill and other polluting infrastructure.

BLARG highlights the lower life expectancy of residents of North Bellport. TBL is close to a school, a library, and a correctional facility. A December 2018 AP article "Will you live to 73-93? It may depend on your neighborhood," notes, "...even your life span can be local." It states: "On Long Island, a tract in North Bellport had the lowest life expectancy, 73.2 years, while Shelter Island had the highest, 92.9 years."

"Sick School" is a 2019 documentary about The Frank P. Long Intermediate School in North Bellport. The film focuses on the alarming number of deaths of staff members and extremely high numbers of cancer diagnoses. One parent told me that after watching "Sick School," she is home-schooling her children.



SOUTH OF THE TRACKS. Colonial Avenue, above, is typical of the well-kept Bellport neighborhoods below the Long Island Rail Road tracks.

NORTH OF THE TRACKS. This North Bellport development, built in the 1950s, contains some cared-for homes, but others are vacant or dilapidated.

School Order Cuts Into a 'Split' Bellport

Peter Ward.

Bellport, L. I., May 29—Peter Ward, one of the descendants of the Poospatuck Indians, died last week at his home in the little negro settlement to the north of Bellport. He was over 80 years of age and was one of the characters of this place. He was always talking of the happy hunting grounds and ever believed that when he died he would go to that favored spot. Hereabouts he was termed "a good Indian." The funeral was held last Friday.

MRS. HANNAH DURYEA, 96 years old, one of the oldest colored residents of Long Island, died at her home in Nort Bellport Wednesday. She was a native of Moriches, L. I., and lived in that vicinity all her life. Mrs. Duryea was a widow many years.

Articles from Newsday (1967) and Brooklyn Daily Eagle (1900 & 1920) depict North Bellport as a Black community.

Pollution as legacy

Many Long Islanders live with the consequences of pollution caused by the military and aviation industries, well before environmental regulations were enacted. TBL's earliest cell was built in that era. Residents of the Town of Brookhaven are reaping this mixed legacy and pay a heavy price.

That price includes several toxic plumes within the Town of Brookhaven. The plume from the towering 270-foot-tall, 192-acre TBL extends approximately 1.5 miles southeast. It has spread forever chemicals to the groundwater under homes and roadways in several communities. A portion of it discharges into Beaver Dam Creek.

[cont'd on pg. 6]

A Landfill, an Aquifer, and the Pine Barrens ***[cont'd from pg. 5]***



Screenshot of "Sick School" documentary title page on IMDB

What can be done?

Ideas on the Zero Waste approach were presented this year to the Brookhaven Town Board. The town has also presented a Corrective Measures plan. However, some community advocates claim it falls far short, because it does not take into account the cumulative cost to the health of human beings.

In Part 2: TBL, the Pine Barrens, and the Aquifer
Gloria Peláez Shea and her husband worship at Christ Church, Bellport.

Thanksgiving for the Earth





BY BENJAMIN SPIER

As a former journalist, I felt compelled to focus on bad news, and in environmental journalism, the news is apocalyptic. As a Christian, however, I am compelled to spread the good news of the Gospel. These imperatives coexist awkwardly during the holidays, a time to give thanks for myriad blessings. Is there any environmental good news to be thankful for? Yes, there is.

The energy transition.

The U.S. has abandoned its commitments under the Paris Climate Accord (again), but the rest of the world is forging ahead.

•The International Energy Agency has reported that in 2025 renewables, especially solar, and nuclear power accounted for 60% of new installed power generation. By burning less coal, China began shrinking its electricity-related CO2 emissions, while India's were essentially flat.

•Another bright spot: battery storage—which ensures a steady supply of electricity from intermittent solar and wind sources—was the fastest-growing form of power generation.

•In the Tri-State Area, two massive offshore wind farms under construction near Long Island are projected to begin delivering power to New York City and Long Island in 2027. And last May the New York state legislature passed a new law enabling homeowners to plug in affordable solar generators on their balconies or in their backyards.

Thanksgiving for the Earth ***[cont'd]***

Electrifying transportation.

•According to the IEA, sales of electric cars jumped 20% worldwide in 2025. And in the wake of the Iran oil shock, Cox Automotive reported that the U.S. EV market, battered by the loss of federal tax incentives, sprang to life in the second quarter of 2026, with nearly 250,000 cars sold.
•Aviation is also going electric. In August Heart Aerospace successfully flew the world's largest electric aircraft; the firm's 30-seat hybrid-electric airliner already has orders from United. Four months earlier Joby Aviation flew its electric air taxi between JFK and midtown Manhattan, promising cleaner, quieter transportation in New York City's crowded airspace.



EV charging in Downtown Brooklyn. Photo: © Benjamin Spier

Saving the oceans. Coral reefs, which shelter marine life and protect coastlines, are increasingly threatened by warming waters, which cause the coral to die off through bleaching. Scientists at Stanford University have found that physically touching healthy coral to bleached coral heals the afflicted coral, which may help restore damaged reefs.

Conserving wildlife.

•India's Project Tiger has doubled the population of the endangered cat; the government is now exporting tigers to Cambodia, where the species had gone extinct. Also rebounding are rare Asiatic lions and rhinoceroses, thanks to stepped-up conservation.

•Here in the U.S., the states of California, Colorado, and Arizona are building wildlife overpasses and bridges across some of their busiest highways. These overpasses are already reducing deadly collisions between motorists and deer, elk, and other species.

Good news may pale in the face of accelerating climate change, deforestation, and dwindling biodiversity. Yet the Middle East energy shock and the growing movement against power- and water-guzzling data centers point to a renewed public awareness of the threats facing us. As we celebrate the holidays, let us remember the stirring words of Isaiah, chapter 35: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God."