



Vermont Interfaith Power & Light
A faith-based response to global warming

Green Mountains, Blue Water

Earth Care News

May 2020

GivingTuesdayNow



Photo courtesy Donna C. Roberts

-
- GivingTuesdayNow
 - Pastor Nancy's Earth Day Sermon
 - How Are Major Religions Responding to the Coronavirus?
 - Creating Circles: Communities of Care and Resilience
 - Climate Caucus Update
 - Health Equity & Climate Change: Indigenous Local Traditional Knowledge
 - PBS series, *H2O: The Molecule that Made Us*
 - The 12th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Event - May 7
 - Raise the Blade Campaign Reminder

GivingTuesdayNow Campaign

Next Tuesday, May 5, 2020, is GivingTuesdayNow, a COVID-timed emergency version of the annual December campaign with which many of us are familiar. VT IPL remains focused on mobilizing Vermont faith communities to address the climate crisis, even as we all wrestle with the impacts of COVID-19 on Vermonters, our livelihood, and the planet. On this pandemic-related GivingTuesdayNow, VT IPL asks you for a donation to support our ongoing work.

VT IPL continues its work with congregations, and with Vermont policy and program leaders urging that we take necessary steps to address the climate crisis while we adapt our lives to impacts of COVID-19. In February, we convened a meeting of faith leaders from across Vermont to speak to the legislature's leadership in Montpelier. In April, we supported Vermont congregations in celebrating Faith Climate Action Week, linking actions to Earth Day's 50th anniversary.

Congregations across Vermont are developing new modes of gathering and communicating as they adapt to self-isolation while engaging at safe distances. VT IPL is committed to helping by disseminating new tools while urging action by the State Legislature and Governor to enact the groundbreaking Global Warming Solutions Act. VT IPL is speaking out. We praise the important work being done to address COVID-19. At the same time, we call for action this year to enact this bi-partisan climate legislation.

The COVID pandemic is showing us all how humans can change behaviors quickly and drastically when motivated. We have all altered our ways of living and being in order to protect our health and that of our neighbors. Scientists are pointing out the connection between the emergence of this new lethal virus, and the environmental disruption associated with climate changes and

globalization. We are seeing clearly how our behavior impacts the natural world.

This underscores the importance of the work of VT IPL and our member congregations and organizations, while providing an opportunity to emphasize that when humans act from a place of caring for the greater whole and our communities, as well as ourselves, and from a place of ethical conviction, the Earth also benefits. The pandemic challenges us to sustain an unwavering effort to mobilize action to address the long term climate crisis in the face of major changes in our everyday lives.

Today we ask you for your support to help us carry on. If you can, please donate to VT IPL on Giving Tuesday. To make an online contribution, click the "Donate Now" button below. To mail a check, please send your contribution to Vermont Interfaith Power and Light, PO Box 3095, Burlington, VT 05408. Thank you so much for considering our request.

[Donate Now](#)

Pastor Nancy Wright's Earth Day Sermon

Pastor Nancy Wright of Ascension Lutheran Church and a VT IPL Board member shared a wonderful Earth Day sermon last weekend. She invites us to consider how our hearts are burning within us, and to recognize our fire and passion to care for the Earth. "Whatever the circumstance", Pastor Nancy reminds us, "we live in a time of resetting of what we took to be norms. Many have been saying that this is a pregnant time of possible renewal and change, a true resurrection moment. 'Heal and come back better' was the Earth Day theme of Ascension's Care for Creation Committee...creating a new vision for how humans can live on Earth. We need to live more simply so others can simply live." Pastor Nancy also referenced Martin Luther King Jr.'s timely quote, "We are now faced with the fierce urgency of now....This is no time for apathy or complacency". [Earth Day sermon here.](#)



The sermon closes with a reference to the oft-cited article, “The Pandemic as a portal”, by Indian author Arundhati Roy. Here are a few excerpts from this piece:

The tragedy is immediate, real, epic and unfolding before our eyes. But it isn't new. It is the wreckage of a train that has been careening down the track for years....Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to “normality”, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists....Nothing could be worse than a return to normality....Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it. [Full article here.](#)

How Are Major Religions Responding to the Coronavirus?

This article by Kali Robinson was recently published by the Council on Foreign Relations. It explores how many of the world's faithful have altered long-standing religious practices to avoid spreading the new coronavirus.

[Read article here.](#)

Creating Circles: Communities of Care & Resilience

GreenFaith has created a guide to help communities and people of faith step up at this time. The living document includes suggestions and resources that we hope you find useful, including a step-by-step process to get started (or keep going!) with mutual, tangible community support. GreenFaith continues its live Faith Community Calls for Care and Resilience on Thursdays with faith leaders and others from around the world. It's easily accessible via the

[GreenFaith Facebook page.](#) [Click here to learn more about Creating Circles of Care.](#)



Update on the Climate Caucus

(by VT IPL Board member Richard Butz)

The Climate Caucus convened a Zoom meeting on April 23 led by co-chairs Sen. Chris Pearson and Rep. Sarah Copeland-Hanzas. The purpose was to hear from NGO's about their work and ideas about how to get "Climate" back on track as a

legislative priority during the COVID crisis.

- COVID demonstrates our connection with each other and the global community.
- It's important to use resources that come forward to rebuild not what we had, but for sustainability, even though forces are actively working to tear down the environmental gains over the last fifty years.
- Particular emphasis needs to be putting people to work, weatherization, investing in local agriculture and businesses, rethinking the supply chain, strengthening, and making broadband available to all.
- Additional emphasis is on infrastructure projects that are "shovel ready", particularly those that build resiliency such as modernizing the grid, encouraging solar and wind, and building electrical storage capacity.
- Can we utilize what we've learned about working and meeting from home to make much of our daily travel unnecessary?

Some comments from legislators:

- Rep. Mary Hooper, of the Appropriations Committee, said people are beginning to compete for federal funds to mitigate the hit to the economy so it's going to be difficult to appropriate funds for climate initiatives.
- Sen. McCormack said we're probably going to need to get on our feet and "true-up" later.
- Rep. Copeland-Hanzas said we should look for opportunities.

Richard's takeaway: We're still in the middle of the storm and there's great uncertainty. Legislators know the public's focus is on getting back to work and financial struggles, not the climate. However, this crisis has unearthed weaknesses in our systems that will be present in any future emergency unless we become more resilient. Our messaging needs to make these connections: science-based planning, sustainable practices, and equal access should be key to any decisions moving forward. The advice is to keep writing to our leaders to make them aware that the Global Warming Solutions Act is key to recovery.

Health Equity & Climate Change: Indigenous Local Traditional Knowledge

A recent webinar focused on how often overlooked wisdoms can provide insights for equitable solutions to health and climate challenges. Many think of indigenous traditional ways as what was referred to as “surface culture” vs. their actual “deep culture”, including weather forecasting, navigation skills, plant, animal and star knowledge. One repeated reference was to Mother Nature and how we must mimic the wisdom of nature. Participants included James Skeet of Covenant Pathways and Spirit Farms, Larry W. Campbell, Community Health Specialist for the Swinomish Community Environmental Health Program, and Jacqueline Qataliña Schaeffer of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

Jacqueline remarked how her culture feels the impacts of climate change greater than most, as they don't rely on grocery stores, but rather the land and sea, the migration of marine species and seasonal harvesting, allowing nature and the planet to give. She would like to share this knowledge to help people across the globe. Jacqueline wants her people to “become the warriors in the boardroom”, as they have two unique perspectives, traditional and western.

Larry spoke of their elders knowing where to find plants and animals, so their absence leads to knowledge that major changes are taking place. He gave the example of seeing salmon disappearing, that salmon are an indicator species. He said their elders always said, “If the environment is sick, we're going to be sick.” Larry shared about opportunities and challenges inherent in younger tribal members getting both western and traditional educations, and the creativity required to integrate lessons from the two “tribes”. He affirmed the importance of younger members becoming leaders, and of tribes having a stronger voice in science to integrate their priorities and knowledge.

As a farmer, James, a Dene of the Navajo Nation, says we've “stopped mimicking Mother Nature”. He says we've lost the notion of kinship, like relationships with the soil's microbes which are vital to life. “Why don't we honor that and see it as sacred?” He says this applies to animals and plants, considered “grandmothers and grandfathers”, and how we no longer understand their language, allowing them to be our teachers. He spoke of portals to knowledge, the deep roots of knowledge. Ultimately, James said we need a better idea of how we fit into the larger world of Mother Nature, how

the industrial mechanical mindset lacks the ethical premise that indigenous peoples maintain. He also emphasized the inequities surfacing during the pandemic, and how the environmental justice movement could benefit from the knowledge of indigenous peoples, who are also marginalized. [Access webinar recording.](#)

H2O: The Molecule That Made Us

PBS is currently airing “H2O: The Molecule That Made Us”, a 3-part series that tells the human story through our relationship with water. Next week is the final episode. Other episodes are already available for streaming. Check your local listings on this [PBS link.](#)



The 12th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival is Thursday, May 7, at 7 pm. Vermont Natural Resources Council is co-hosting the virtual film night with Patagonia Burlington. The 2020 short films highlight the importance of equitable access to open spaces and public lands. They explore what it means to be a person of color navigating the outdoors; how an athlete became the first blind man to kayak the Colorado River; bringing diversity to the field of beekeeping; and much more. [Learn more here.](#)

Raise the Blade Campaign Reminder

Finally, spring has sprung! Lawn and garden care invite us outdoors to celebrate the blush of green and welcome new life. As you mow your lawns, the Raise the Blade campaign encourages us to follow three lawn care practices that help filter stormwater and reduce its flow into lakes and streams:

1. Cut the grass to 3 inches in height (instead of to one or two inches). The longer the grass, the longer the roots, creating more air spaces in the soil to

absorb water and reaching moisture during drought.

2. Leave the grass clippings to decompose in place instead of bagging them. Clippings break down into organic matter and become fertilizer, feeding the grass with nitrogen and phosphorus. Organic matter makes the soil act like a sponge, absorbing, and filtering stormwater.

3. Cut only 1/3 of the grass blade length at each mowing. This preserves the strength of the grass blade and allows for quicker decomposition of clippings. Raise the Blade is a partnership initiative working with homeowners, nonprofits, businesses, and municipalities to encourage practices that support clean water. Several campaign partners collaborate with VT IPL in the Clean Water Network on events such as Celebrating Sacred Waters. Learn more by contacting Linda Patterson, Water Quality Educator, Lake Champlain Sea Grant. [Email Linda.](#)



Photo courtesy Donna C. Roberts

