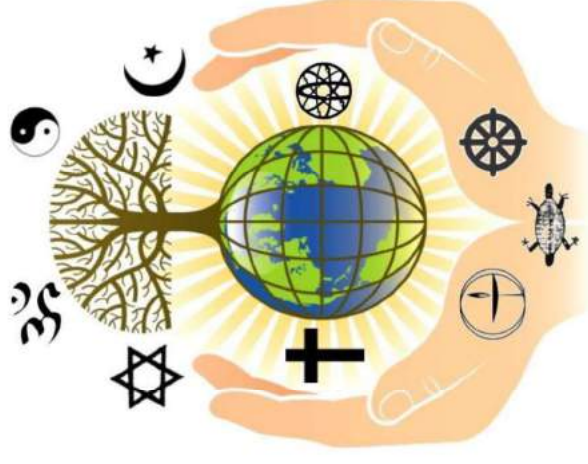
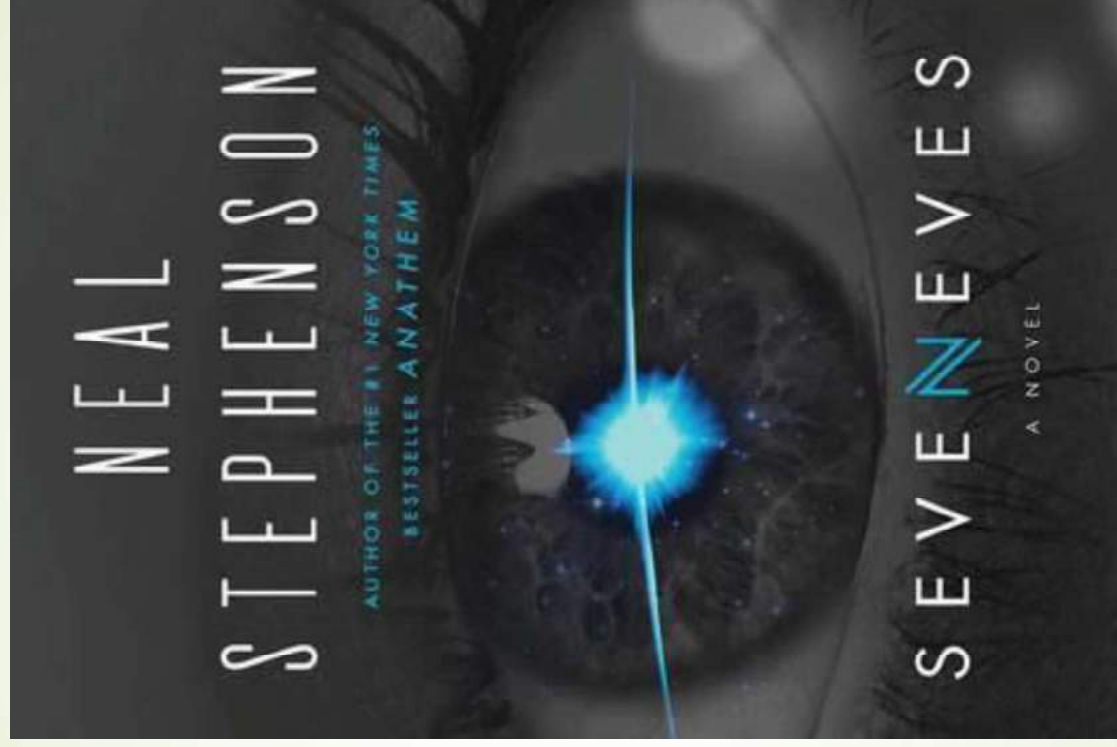


Beyond “Creation Care”: Building the Eco-Ethical Ark in the Age of Climate Disruption

The Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade
Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship
Lexington Theological Seminary, Kentucky







This world is not my home . . .



This world it IS my home!



Creation Clarity
Creation Compliance
Creation Compassion

Creation Clarity



"A World at War." The New Republic. August 15, 2016



Bill McKibben



ACLU National ✓
@ACLU



Pulling out of the Paris Agreement would be a massive step back for racial justice, and an assault on communities of color across the U.S.



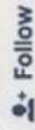
Bill de Blasio ✓
@NYCMayor



Abandoning the Paris accords will be horribly destructive to the Earth and horribly destructive for New York City.



Bernie Sanders ✓
@SenSanders



Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement is an abdication of American leadership and an international disgrace.



"As Leah D. Schade makes clear, we need to
green the pulpit if we're going to green the planet."

—Bill McKibben, co-founder of 350.org

Creation-Crisis Preaching

Ecology, Theology,
and the Pulpit

Leah D. Schade

Survey: “Preaching about Controversial Issues”

- **What: 60-question online survey
(SurveyMonkey.com)**
- **When: Jan. – Feb. 2017, 6 weeks**
- **Who: 1205 mainline Protestant clergy in the U.S.**
- **Why: To assess how preachers are approaching
their sermons during this divisive time in our
nation’s history.**

Range of topics included:

- **The difference the 2016 presidential election has made in preachers' willingness to address controversial issues in the pulpit**
- **Reasons clergy list for either engaging controversial topics in their sermons, or avoiding them**

TOP 10 Controversial issues in sermons – 2016

Please mark the following topics that you intentionally and/or specifically addressed or incorporated into your preaching in the LAST 12 MONTHS.

838 respondents.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	RANK
Poverty	83.3%	698	1
Racial and/or ethnic tensions	68.3%	572	2
Food insecurity/hunger	66.1%	554	3
Homelessness	64.9%	544	4
Immigration/Refugees/Migrant workers	59.1%	495	5
Rights for persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex	51.8%	434	6
White privilege/White supremacy	50.4%	422	7
Interfaith relations	47.5%	398	8
Mental illness	46.9%	393	9
Bullying	45.1%	378	10

Confidence level: 95%. Margin of error: 3.4%

Controversial issues in sermons – 2016

BOTTOM 13 of 38

838 respondents. RANK

Climate change	24.6%	206	26
Anti-Semitism (hostility, prejudice, or discrimination against Jews)	24.0%	201	27
Child abuse	23.2%	194	28
Human trafficking/Slavery	22.4%	188	29
Disabilities	22.3%	187	30
Gender-based violence and/or rape	19.1%	160	31
Pollution	16.3%	137	32
Native American issues	14.6%	122	33
Women's access to reproductive health	10.1%	85	34
Clean energy/renewable energy	9.1%	76	35
Environmental racism	6.9%	58	36
Fossil fuel extraction (fracking, mountain-top removal, pipelines, etc.)	5.6%	47	37
Species extinction	3.5%	29	38
Other	7.6%	64	

Confidence level: 95%. Margin of error: 3.4%

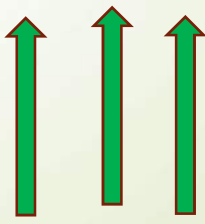
Choose two of the topics that you are most likely to avoid in your preaching

- 319 out of 761 respondents chose one of the environmental issues (climate change, species extinction, fossil fuel extraction, environmental racism, pollution, clean/renewable energy).
- In other words, 42% of respondents on that question listed at least one environmental issue as a topic they would avoid in preaching.

“Hot Topics” clergy consider off-limits



Women’s reproductive health	205	27%
Fossil fuel extraction (fracking, MTR, pipelines, etc.)	141	19%
Critique of capitalism	134	18%
White privilege	100	13%
Rights for LGBTQ	98	13%
Gun violence	96	13%
War/militarization	79	10%
Species extinction	72	9%
Environmental racism	60	8%
Climate change	29	4%





Reasons clergy avoid environmental issues in preaching

THOUGHT TO BE ANTITHETICAL TO THE GOSPEL

- ▶ “What do any of these [environmental] issues have to do with the gospel?”
- ▶ “[Fossil fuel extraction] **isn’t the gospel.**”
- ▶ “[Clean/renewable energy] has **no relation to the gospel message.**”
- ▶ “[Species extinction] is **not applicable to the gospel text.**”

Reasons clergy avoid environmental issues in preaching

NOT A PRIORITY

- “I can't envision [clean/renewable energy] as a topic for preaching, as there are **other issues that are much more important, urgent, and relevant to preach on.**”
- “There's little direct action anyone can take. **There are more important/pressing issues.**”
- “I don't want to lose my job. **I don't want to distract congregation** from doing healing work.”
- “[Species extinction is] **not my most pressing issue.** But, I recognize that the increase of our population has changed the national and international landscape and division of resources.”
- [Species extinction]: “**Other bigger fish to fry** (ironically enough!)”



Reasons clergy avoid environmental issues in preaching

TOO OBSCURE, COMPLEX

- “This item [environmental racism] does not exist.”
- “I have no idea what [environmental racism] is.”
- “It’s too complicated.”
- “I feel getting them to admit racism is a problem first is a step we’ve yet to achieve (on the whole).”



Reasons clergy avoid environmental issues in preaching

DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOUR PARISHIONERS

- “So many **livelihoods** in the congregation are tied to fossil fuels. Also, misinformation is too strong to untangle in one sermon.”
- “Too many parishioners have **livelihood** in this industry; hard to separate personal from systemic.”
- “It's difficult to preach against an industry where most of your members **make a living** or are directly associated with it.”
- “Members associated with fossil fuel extraction view [clean/renewable energy] as a direct **economic** threat in an already severely depressed area.”
- “**Livelihood** of some in my congregation depends on coal.”
- “This is my congregations' **primary source of income**.”
- “Heavily fossil fuel based **industries in the area**.”

Why preaching about environmental issues matters

- ➡ “Americans who say their clergy leader speaks at least occasionally about climate change are more likely to be climate change Believers than Americans who tend not to hear about climate change in church (49% and 36%, respectively).” (PRRI/AAR survey, 2014).

CREATION CLARITY: INTERSECTIONS

- ▶ **Climate crisis exacerbates:**
 - ▶ Refugee crisis
 - ▶ Islamophobia and xenophobia
- ▶ **Connect hunger and climate crisis:**
 - ▶ Crop production, blight, and the devastation of agriculture due to catastrophic weather events (witness Puerto Rico's decimated farming industry after Hurricane Maria).

Climate change = blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

- Jesus talked about the sin of “blaspheming the Holy Spirit” (Mark 3:28-30; Matthew 12:31-32),
- Could we apply this to our desecration of God’s very breath, the atmosphere of Earth, the *ruah*, the Holy Spirit?
- What is God calling us to do in the midst of this crisis?
- How is the Holy Spirit leading us to respond?

Creation Compliance





Aerial photo of damaged homes along New Jersey shore after Hurricane Sandy. Photo credit: Greg Thompson/USFWS. Public Domain



Citizens' Climate Radio

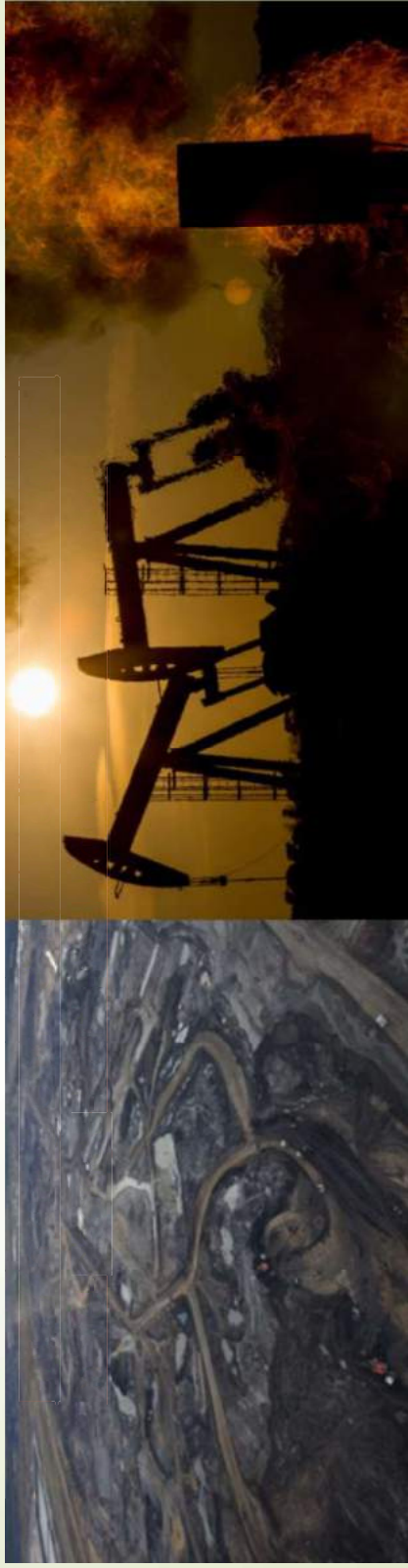
“The Uninhabitable Earth”

*Famine, economic collapse, a sun that cooks us:
What climate change could wreak — sooner than
you think.*

By [David Wallace-Wells](#)

New York Magazine

July 2017



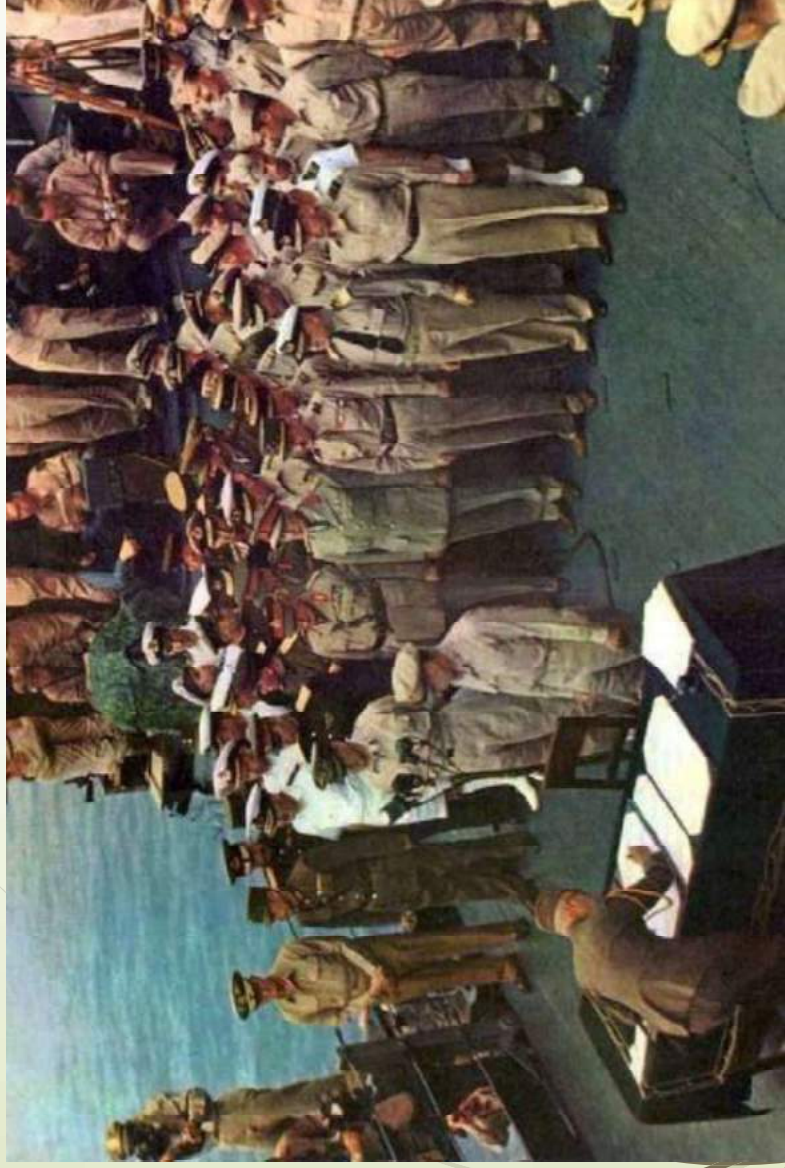
Conditions we are facing even now (which will become catastrophic within the next 50 – 100 years)

- Crop failures
- Heat deaths
- Wars over resources
- Climate refugees
- Exotic diseases (climate plagues)
- Unbreathable air
- Oceans unable to sustain life
- Economic collapse



GOES-16 Geocolor of Hurricane Irma on September 6, 2017. NOAA. Public domain.

Nature is giving us a “Potsdam Declaration”



USS Missouri: the End of World War
II in the Pacific: Japanese
Surrender. September 2, 1945.
Public domain. [paukrus.flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/paukrus/)

“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?” (Luke 9:24-25).



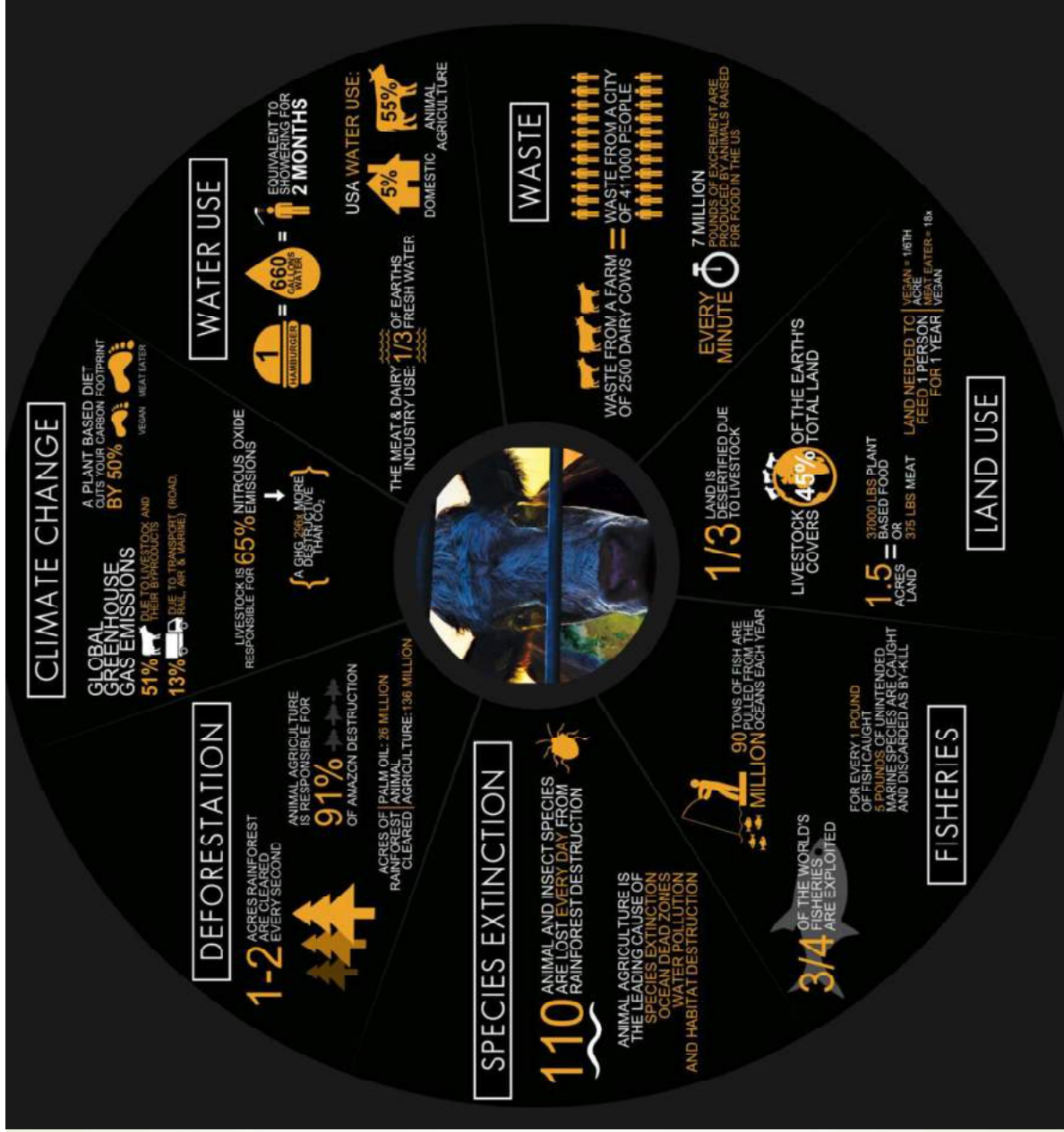
(Photo by Don Taylor of Littleton, Colorado;
<http://kisselpaso.com/photo-of-the-day-leafy-green-jesus-on-a-telephone-pole-in-colorado/>)

COWSPIRACY

THE SUSTAINABILITY SECRET

THE FACTS

ANIMAL AGRICULTURE IS THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE INDUSTRY FACING THE PLANET TODAY. HERE'S WHY:



How a Handful of Scientists

Obscured the Truth on

Issues from Tobacco

Smoke to Global

Warming

Merchants of DOUBT

Naomi Oreskes
& Erik M. Conway



So why can't we see it?

“The dilemmas and dramas of climate change are simply incompatible with the kinds of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, especially in novels, which tend to emphasize the journey of an individual conscience rather than the poisonous miasma of social fate.”

- Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh (quoted by Wallace-Wells)

Creation Compassion



Elizabeth Kubler-Ross: Stages of Grief

7 Stages of Grief

(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

Shock*

- Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.

Denial

- Trying to avoid the inevitable.

Anger

- Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.

Bargaining

- Seeking in vain for a way out.

Depression

- Final realization of the inevitable.

Testing*

- Seeking realistic solutions.

Acceptance

- Finally finding the way forward.

* This model is extended slightly from the original Kubler-Ross model, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. These stages however are often useful to understand and to facilitate change.

<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/grief/understanding-the-stages-of-grief/>

Shock*

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“The Dark Night of the Green Soul”



Sudan, the last male Northern White Rhino. Died in Kenya, March 20, 2018.



Creation Compassion



“There is...no knowledge of God in the land...Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing” (Hosea 4:1b, 3).

THE NECESSITY AND FUNCTION OF LAMENT

Our telling the truth about the state of our world is like a form of biblical lament.

Walter Brueggemann tells us lament achieves three things:

- 1. recognizes the reality of injustice, loss, and grief
- 2. names that injustice as intolerable
- 3. ultimately, moves us to action to follow God's call to make it right again.

[See Brueggeman's book, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, Chapter 3 (Augsburg Fortress: 1984)].

Testing*

- Seeking realistic solutions.

Acceptance

- Finally finding the way forward.

The Eco-Ethical Ark





Interfaith Sacred Earth Coalition of
the Susquehanna Valley
(Pennsylvania), 2012.



Leah Schade with fellow protesters at the Poor
People's Campaign rally, June 4, 2018,
Frankfort, KY.

Exodus from Fossil Fuel: An Interfaith Witness for Climate Action



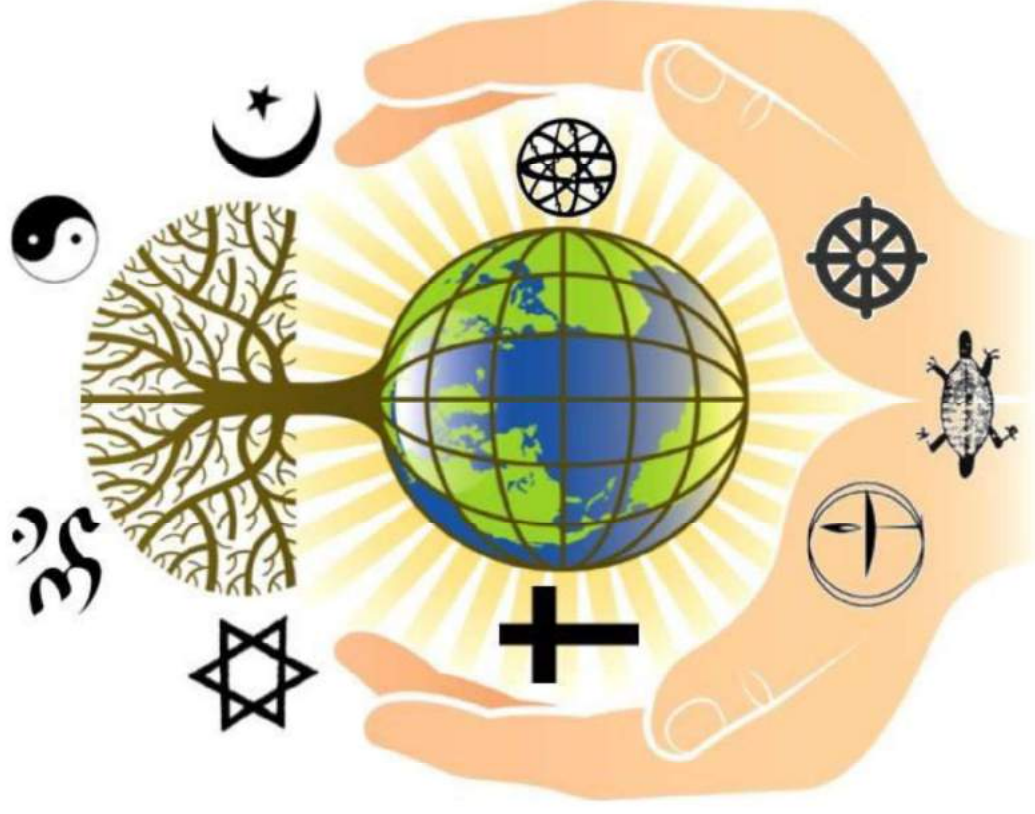
Leaders and members of faith communities gathered on the steps of the Massachusetts State House to call upon Governor Baker to take bold leadership in addressing climate disruption.

April 2018



***Rooted and Rising:
The Search for
Meaning and
Courage in a Time of
Climate Crisis***

**Edited by
Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
and Leah D. Schade
(forthcoming)**





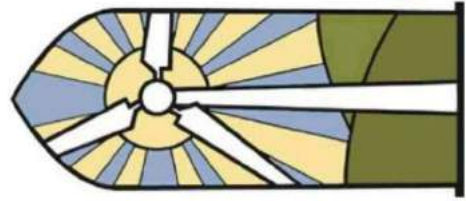
Let's be our best selves.



BLESSED
TOMORROW™

Caring for Creation Today

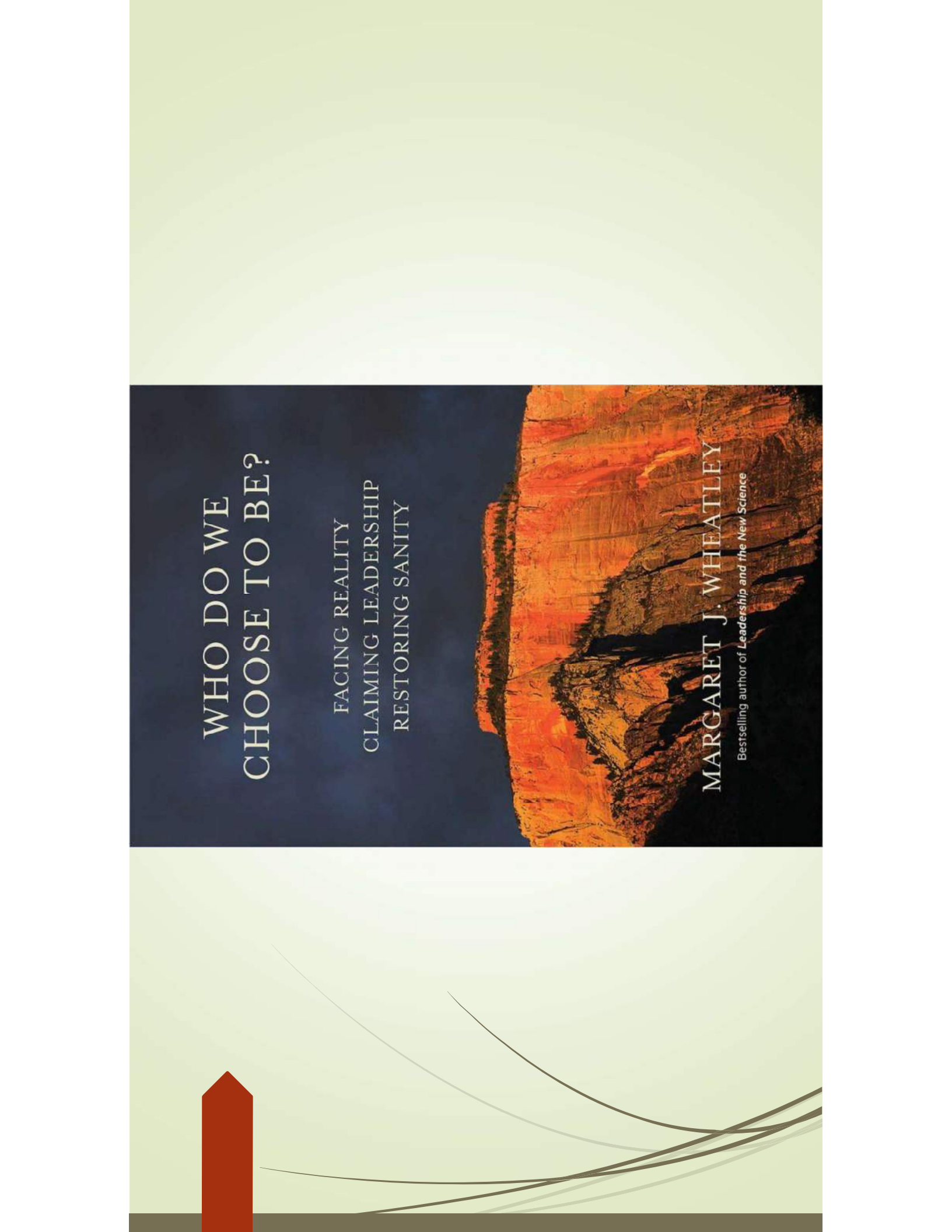
GreenFaithSM
Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth



INTERFAITH
Power
& Light

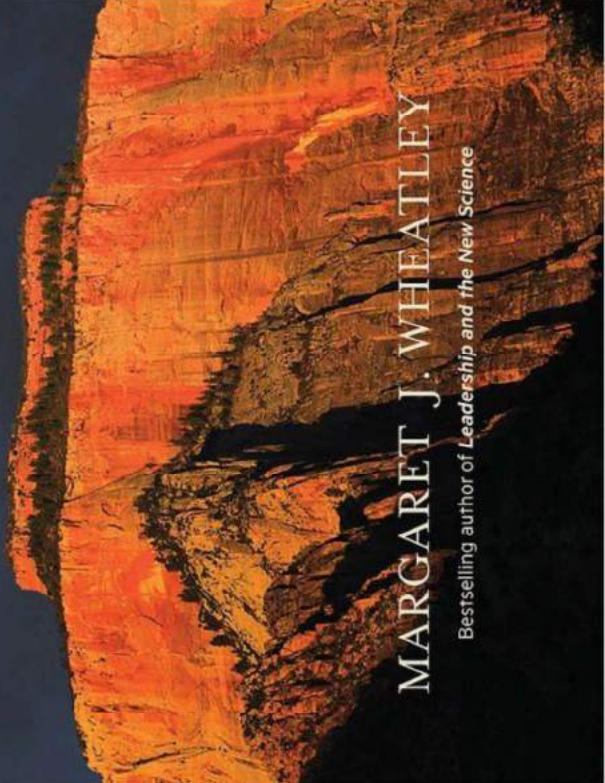


A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL



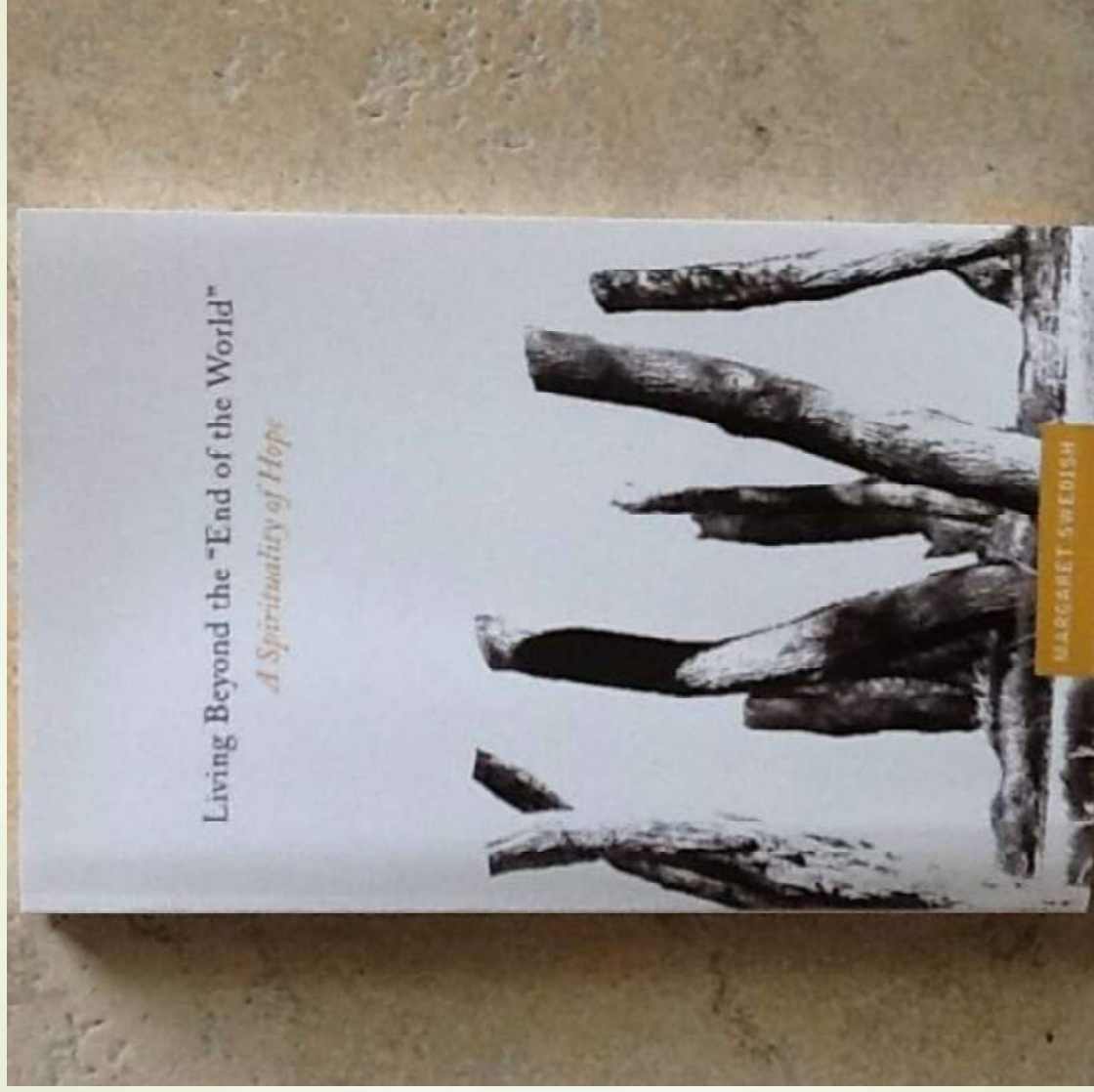
WHO DO WE CHOOSE TO BE?

FACING REALITY
CLAIMING LEADERSHIP
RESTORING SANITY



MARGARET J. WHEATLEY

Bestselling author of *Leadership and the New Science*







Interfaith anti-fracking rally. Harrisburg, PA, 2016.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this, than one lays down one’s life for one’s friends.” - John 15:12-13



Leah Schade leading a prayer vigil held at the site of Riverdale Mobile Home Park in Jersey Shore, PA, before it was destroyed to make room for a water withdrawal plant along the Susquehanna River for the fracking industry. May 2012.

The women at the tomb did not go thinking they could save Jesus. They went because that is what they were called to do.

Likewise, we do not do this work thinking we can “save” the planet. We do this because it is what we are called to do.





The Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade



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Lexington Theological Seminary

Author, *Creation-Crisis Preaching*

(Chalice Press, 2015)

Patheos blogger: EcoPreacher

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/ecopreacher/>