 **Safeguarding Our Earth For Future Generations**

*The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world it leaves its children." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer (20th C. German Lutheran theologian)*

January 2023 Creation Care Green Tips,

Prepared by Laura Raedeke,

Lutheran Church of the Cross, Nisswa

EcoFaith Leadership Team NE MN Synod

1.  Many faith traditions speak of honoring future generations, as expressed in Genesis 17:7, "I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."  This implies a responsibility to care for one another by caring for our Earth, our common home.  Our children have a **sacred right** to a livable future, with air they can breathe, water they can drink, land they can grow food on, and a stable climate ([interfaithpowerandlight.org](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org)).  As their future is being threatened by our climate crisis, and as pollution makes it difficult to sustain life, author Joanna Macy ("The Great Turning") urges us to venerate our Earth, seeing it not as a supply house and sewer, but as our larger body.  The decisions we make now will determine whether our children and grandchildren will thrive in the world we leave them.

2.  Is there a spiritual solution to climate change?  Bestselling British author and scholar Karen Armstrong, in her latest book, "Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond With the Natural World," writes that past faith practices and teachings can show us how to rebuild a reverence for and connection to the natural world, a world "teeming with life that we ignore, but which we are destroying day by day."  Facts about rising temperatures, extreme weather and a changing climate often don't move us emotionally, something Armstrong wants to address by urging people to incorporate simple practices, such as just sitting and watching a tree for 10 minutes, in order to feel a connection to, and gratitude for, the natural world.  We can say we believe God created the world, Armstrong says, but "it's really very, very ungrateful of us to mess it up."

3.  Native American wisdom, for instance, the Seventh Generation Principle, is based on an ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) philosophy that we should consider how today's decisions impact those seven generations from now ([interfaithpowerandlight.org](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org)).  "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children," is another ancient Native philosophy, and reflects the belief that the many things in nature are our companions, and should be treated as carefully as we treat one another.  The chief of the Kiowa Tribe, following subjugation by those conquering them, described the tribe as "people standing in good relations to their environment, their beliefs, and all that is beautiful.  They were *alive."*

4.  In the U.S., we have legal provisions that protect the rights of future generations to a healthy environment.  The "public trust doctrine" calls the government to protect certain natural resources for the public good ([interfaithpowerandlight.org](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org)), and the Bill of Rights of our constitution protects our "fundamental right to life, liberty, and property" that is being threatened by extreme weather events such as floods, wildfires and heat waves, or incremental changes such as sea level rise.  Young people know they will have to deal with the ravages of both climate change and habitat destruction, and are speaking out about how their futures are imperiled.  Click on [**bit.ly/resourcesIPL**](http://bit.ly/resourcesIPL)for a list of resources for worship, sermons or talks, climate study for youth and adults, short films, Joanna Macy's intergenerational exercise, and more.

5.  Every single major world religion has some form of what we call the Golden Rule, or as Confucius in sixth century China put it: "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."  British author and scholar Karen Armstrong, in her book, "Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond With the Natural World," expands on that to urge us to "get beyond your own selfishness, which we all have, look into your own heart, discover what gives you pain, and then refuse under any circumstance whatsoever to inflict that pain on anybody else."  All faith traditions have a**sacred trust** to care for one another in a relationship of mutual accountability, which requires that we adults engage with our youth and children to learn and act together to imagine a beautiful, livable Earth.  "In the end, we only conserve what we love/ We will only love what we understand/  We will only understand what we are taught." - Sengalese poet Baba Dioum