



## Resources for Creation-centered Ministry and Spiritual Leadership

### 1. Talitha Amadea Aho, *In Deep Waters: Spiritual Care for Young People in a Climate Crisis* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022)

A Presbyterian youth minister, Talitha Amadea Aho explores the spiritual needs of young people in today's world who fear for their future and the future of the Earth.

"The climate crisis has left a generation (and more) feeling profoundly unloved . . . They watch while the people in power do not even try to avert the climate emergency, and they interpret this as a message from the older generations saying their lives are not worth fighting for" (pp. 75-76).

A blend of achingly honest story-telling, poignant conversations with young people, and spiritual-theological reflection, Aho identifies three spiritual needs among the youth she serves: 1.) love and belonging, 2.) direction and motivation, and 3.) interpersonal accountability. Readers of all ages experiencing climate anxiety and grief, and frustrated with political inaction, will learn from the young people whose stories and astute observations are reproduced here. They will recognize shared spiritual longings for healthy relationships and community action – with a strong dose of time away from screens and in nature – and yearn to make visible their care for upcoming generations who will bear the consequences of decisions we make (or don't make) *now* to avert even more severe climate disruption.

### 2. Victoria Loorz, *Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us into the Sacred* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021)

Resonant with the growing intuition that, in order to open our hearts to respond to the harsh realities of the climate crisis and ecosystem collapse, we must seek deepening relationships in and with the natural world, the burgeoning Church of the Wild movement explores new ways to worship. Loorz uses *wild* to reframe *church* as "a place of intentional connection with the sacred . . . fully in relationship with, and even initiated by nature" (p. 6). A broadly inclusive worshipping community gathers outdoors, engages in silence, music, prayer and poetry, before solo-wandering in communion with creation. Bringing what has been shared and learned from other creatures back to the circle, the day's sermon is created as mutual conversation. Wild church worship closes with gratitude and wild blessings. Loorz explores this new form of communal practice with story and reflection, offering connections to Christian experience and tradition.

### 3. Debra Rienstra, *Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonders, and the Healing of the Earth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023)

"God loves to work in small, humble, hidden places" (p. 5). Debra Rienstra revisits Mt. St. Helens forty years after it was devastated by a volcanic eruption in 1980; today the mountain is lush with vegetation and unexpectedly rapid ecological renewal made possible by *refugia* – "little pockets of safety" hidden in the rocks on the lee side of the explosion that protected seeds and small creatures until conditions were right for life to reemerge. How might Christians, and Christian communities, become places of shelter in these times of accelerating climate collapse and ecological devastation? How might we provide refuge in which to protect, connect and ready ourselves for the work of restoration and renewal? Rienstra shares wisdom from Christian liturgical rhythms and eco-theologians, as well as Indigenous leaders and nature writers, while

interspersing thoughtful content with poetic reflections on her own modest efforts to reconnect with the natural world. This book is rapidly gaining attention among eco-minded people of faith.

4. **Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2015)**

Because climate change has become so politicized, particularly in the United States, and because its implications are so overwhelming, we tend to shy away from talking about the creation-crisis in church. But what could be more foundational for Christian life than the care of God's good creation? What could be more urgent than providing a livable home for generations to come? With a Lutheran, eco-feminist lens Leah Schade urges us to "green the pulpit." She provides theological grounding and homiletic strategies from which to preach the sacredness of creation and environmental responsiveness. She includes examples of short, ecologically relevant sermons with themes that welcome children to creation, bear witness to earth's crucifixion and proclaim resurrection. A closing trilogy of sermons listen to the voices of Earth, Water and Wind as they speak the Holy Spirit's perspective on climate disruption.

5. **Leah D. Schade and Margaret Bullitt-Jones, *Rooted & Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019)**

"For it may be the case that—as with the abolitionist movement in the nineteenth century and the civil rights movement in the twentieth century—we will not respond at the scale and speed required until we see climate disruption as a moral issue and a spiritual challenge." (Mary Evelyn Tucker, Foreward to *Rooted & Rising*, xv).

A collection of essays by ministers, rabbis, theologians, scientists and activists representing a broad spectrum of Judeo-Christian-Islamic faith practitioners, *Rooted and Rising* challenges us to bold action for healing "the whole family of God." Building on the universal symbol of the Tree of Life, readers are called to take root in 'interfaith friendships,' 'science and policy,' 'liturgy and moral clarity' even as they rise through 'local activism' carrying 'wisdom from the margins.' Particularly valuable are spiritual practices interspersed between sections that bespeak the hard work of climate activism. A final section acknowledges both environmental grief and love for every leaf of every branch on the Tree of Life to sustain us in this vital work of creation care.

6. **Fred Bahnson & Norman Wirzba, *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2012)**

God's work of reconciliation begins with restoration of right relationships with the land, steeped in awareness of the interdependence of all creation. A collaboration between a permaculture gardener with a passion for church-supported agriculture and a Professor of Theology and Ecology at Duke Divinity School, "*Making Peace with the Land* offers a vision of reconciliation of God as a gardener, physically engaged in the work of restoring all creation to wholeness . . . This is a book about communion in its deepest sense." (Sara Miles, from the back cover).

7. **Christian Century, eds., "Responding to Climate Change: A Guide for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion," 2023. Available as free pdf at <https://www.christiancentury.org/free-guide-climate-change>.**

A collection of earth-centered articles from *Christian Century* provide another resource for personal and congregational reflection on how to respond to climate change. Of particular note, the article "40 Ideas for Congregations," by Anna Woofenden (August 10, 2022) is reprinted.

# Resources for Reimagining Stewardship with Kinship, Reciprocity and Indigenous Wisdom



## 1. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013)

“Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond” (pp. 124-125).

If my library was lost (in a climate-fueled wildfire, let’s say) the first book I would replace is *Braiding Sweetgrass*! Robin Wall Kimmerer is a mother, botanist, member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, SUNY-ESF Distinguished Professor and founder of The Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. Her book stands as a sentinel work among contemporary indigenous and nature writers.

*Braiding Sweetgrass* calls us to take our place within the family of all created beings with a kin-centric worldview; shows us how to care for the earth with lifeways grounded in reciprocity, reverence and responsibility; suggests new ways of speaking that reverence all creatures as persons worthy of relationships and respect; and demonstrates an approach to solving ecological problems by pairing mainstream science with Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Blending indigenous wisdom and scientific clarity, Robin Wall Kimmerer offers keen insights about restoring right relationships with the land knowing that that, when we live in a flow of gratitude and mutual care, the land herself will help humanity heal and restore right relationships among us.

The vision offered by Robin Wall Kimmerer and other contemporary indigenous and nature writers, opens us to conversations beyond traditional Christian theology, ethics and spiritual practice. From these broadened horizons readers may catch glimpses of new possibilities with which to reframe, revitalize and deepen our understanding of “stewardship.”

## 2. Gavin Van Horn, Robin Wall Kimmerer, John Hausdoerffer, eds., *Kinship: Belonging in a World of Relations*,” 5 volumes: Planet, Place, Partners, Persons, and Practice (Libertyville, IL: Center for Humans and Nature, 2021)

Also recommended is a collection of essays and poems, written by a who’s who of contemporary indigenous and nature writers reflecting on the ecological promise of remembering our kinship with all creation as the basis for finding a way forward in these times of environmental crises. *Kinship* proffers a vision that “all of our lives depend on the quality of relationships between us ... within an exuberant, life-generating planetary tangle” that is a gloriously interdependent web of life.

Some of us might find the fecund vision of “kinship” deeply resonant with what we call “God’s Sacred Creation,” and discover “kinning” as a path toward bringing about the Peaceable Kin-dom of God on Earth.

**Stay-tuned for an expanded book list! Including books and poetry from David Abram, Wendell Berry, Richard Powers, Suzanne Simard, Terry Tempest Williams and more.**

## Under Review: Recommended by Others

1. Rob Hopkins, *From What Is to What If: Unleashing the Power of the Imagination to Create the Future We Want* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2019). Recommended by Phoebe Barnard (March 2021 Climate Justice Webinar presenter).
2. Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007). Recommended by Barry Lopez in *Syntax of the River*.
3. Patty Krawec, *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022). See Patty Krawec, "Can these stones live?" reprinted in *Christian Century's Resources for Climate Action*, p. 21 (#5 above).
4. David Naguib Pellow, *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2018). Recommended by Ashia Ajani (Feb 2022 Climate Justice Webinar presenter).
5. Norman Wirzba, *Agrarian Spirit: Cultivating Faith, Community, and the Land* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2022). Reviewed in *Christian Century*, February 2023.