



# Crying our Way to a More Anti-Fragile Hope<sup>1</sup>

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I've begun to document my daughters' affective responses to climate change, their authentic and professed feelings about life on an increasingly warm and weirding planet. Unlike me, a late Gen Xer, they find brown Minnesota winters normal and the restrictions accompanying summer forest fires commonplace. This is the world they've inherited.

<sup>1</sup> Large portions of this article were originally shared on October 28, 2024 at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities' annual Picard Lecture on Environmental Theology and Ethics. The lectureship, endowed through the generosity of Rev. Frank Picard and members of the Picard family, seeks to raise questions such as the relation between our spiritual life and the state of the natural world, and the response of religious leadership to the decline of the planet.

*There is a strong and natural temptation to despair in the face of the challenges facing creation and humanity, To this, Christianity speaks a word of strength and hope, understanding the power of God to transform. One way the church can do this is by means of words spoken together (liturgies) which give voice to both our sorrows and our hope.*

But changes to Earth are rapid enough to perceive in a decade or so. Even my young children mourn the losses they recognize. The beloved apple tree bears no fruit as invasive beetles migrate north. Fish disappear from the creek where Nana used to paddle and wild rice. And grief comes as a wave when my eight-year-old looks at the polar bears in Jan Brett's picture book, understanding their plight to be a thing of fiction. In their own ways and with their own words, children attempt to conjure hope in the midst of tears. But if we're honest, don't we all? To me, children are exemplary in their capacity to honor the complexity of feelings and to demand a hope that is honest and more than just talk. Because in light of widespread ecological rupture it is fair to ask—what is hope, really?

### CONSTRUALS OF HOPE

Much has been, and could be, said about hope. This past fall *Word & World* dedicated an entire quarterly to the topic, and many of the articles within that issue address the quandary of Christian hope in trying times. For my purposes here I offer a too-brief account of variations on hope using a schema set forth by the late theologian of hope, Jürgen Moltmann.

Moltmann invites us to think of hope in three modes. First, hope can be a force or energy in the face of something else. Defined by what it presses against—lethargy, despair, resignation—hope is a kind of resistance. It can also be a sober recognition of what is but should not be. Because mourning requires vision for what could have been, this form of hope is lament. And finally, hope can be rejoicing in the promises of God, which come to us from the future. In this sense, hope is a posture and an outlook, a way of orienting oneself.

When it comes to the Christian life, all three of these manifestations are true to our lived experience, just as the Gospels say they were to Christ's human experience. We protest. We weep. We fall into joy. While preaching on the Gospel of John on Easter morning some years ago it occurred to me that Mary Magdalene enacted all three of these modes of hope on that original morning alone: first in coming to the tomb hoping against hope, then crying out in sadness and despair, and finally sharing her joy after encountering the risen Lord. But whether for us or for Mary, it's imperative to notice how in all

three hope is active, not passive. Hope is something we do, not something we have. Moltmann puts it this way:

Hope awakens our sense of potentiality—for what could be. In concrete action we always relate the potentiality to what exists, the present to the future. If our actions were directed only to the future, we should fall victim to utopias; if they were related only to the present, we should miss our chances.<sup>2</sup>

### CULTIVATING HOPE IS A HOLY PRACTICE

This means lament is a holy practice. Perhaps this is why many monastics refer to pain, suffering, and loss as the “gift of tears.” Protoecofeminist theologian Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) was well acquainted with sorrow, speaking of her chronic illness as a portal to a Spirit accessible in the liveliness of the world. Likewise, Julian of Norwich (1342–1416) describes suffering as property of divine love, for the ways it can transform attention.<sup>3</sup> On the relationship between tears and deep spiritual hope scholar of Christian mysticism Douglas Christie shares this helpful insight:

The early Christian monastics knew that tears could help break open the soul, kindling a deeper awareness of one’s vulnerability and fragility, and one’s capacity for intimacy with God and all living beings. But opening oneself in this way required courage, a willingness to face one’s own fragility as well as the fragility and brokenness of the world.... Weeping, when understood as part of a conscious spiritual practice, had the capacity to flood the soul with an awareness of the intricacy, beauty, and spiritual value of all existence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 3.

<sup>3</sup> In *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian says, “Just as our contrariness here on earth brings us pain, shame and sorrow, so grace brings us surpassing comfort, glory, and bliss in heaven... And that shall be a property of blessed love, that we shall know in God which we might never have known without first experiencing woe.”

<sup>4</sup> Douglas Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 77.

Interestingly, threads within contemporary neuroscience make analogous claims; as we now know that our nervous systems are not just resilient in the face of hardship, but anti-fragile. They need adversity to develop properly. Suffering is the portal and divine property of mature human development.<sup>5</sup>

“Negative” affects such as grief are not the opposite of hope, but instead critical ingredients for a robust hope, one that is anti-fragile and able to open us to greater intimacy with all of creation. To creatively reimagine a planetary future where all can flourish our Christian communities must reclaim hope as active lament.

## UNDERSTANDING OUR PLACE IN TIME

To do this well we must honestly assess our place in time. As I articulated in my first book, *Ecology of Vocation*, we are called not just to particular roles, forms of work, or places, but also to this particular time in history. We need to know our context. Transdisciplinary consensus among practitioners and scholars understands Earth’s body as irrevocably changed by our species. We’ve heard this story for some time now, although disciplines have demarcated the effects in various ways. In climatology circles, we’ve heard about global warming. Biologists discuss the proposed sixth mass extinction. In the early-twenty-first century some geologists began using the term Anthropocene, a concept that refers to the largescale changes Earth experiences as a result of human behavior. Not all see the term Anthropocene as a helpful; many other alternative concepts exist.<sup>6</sup> For example, some prefer to tag our current age as the “Capitalocene,” an epoch characterized by exploitative and extractive socioeconomic systems. No matter the term, a shared understanding between peoples the world

<sup>5</sup> Nassim Nicholas Taleb popularized the term “antifragile” in his 2012 book. The concept now has purchase in many fields, including popularized pediatric neurology. Other authors concerned with human development detail antifragile phenomenon in different ways. A notable example is Jonathan Haidt’s bestselling work *The Anxious Generation* (2024), which discusses the merits of hardship in youth development in screen-free environments.

<sup>6</sup> Other notable terms used to describe our current era include: Urbanocene (2004): era of civilizational shift to cities; Hemogenocene (2011): era of mixing organisms that should be isolated; Econocene (2013): era of perpetual economic growth; Plantationocene (2014): era of colonial plantation systems; Chtulocene (2016): era of entangled human/non-human agency; Eremocene (2020): era of loneliness; Technocene (2020): era of neo-environment of technology; Pyrocene (2021): era of global fires; and Necrocene (2021): era of global decay.

over is this—we are living in a new time and must find novel ways to exist. There is no going back. This is what Catholic ecotheologian Thomas Berry called the “Great Work” of our current generations.

So, what does it mean to live well in a new time? As potent as that question may be, it’s not a new one. Christian thinkers have long distinguished between *chronos* time and *kairos* time, the former as linear and the latter as phenomenological and changed by the arrival of a new reality. A good example of this distinction can be found in the 2023 ELCA social message on climate justice entitled *Earth’s Climate Crisis*. The message begins with an important claim: “Climate change presents humanity with a *kairos* moment; that is, a critical moment in time when God is leading us into decisive action.”<sup>7</sup>

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In this sense we’re living in an apocalypse now and do well to call it as such. In addition to exploring nuances of time, Christian theologies must also consider biblical notions of apocalyptic times within the Jewish Tanakh and the Greek New Testament. *Apocalypso* (ἀποκαλύπτω) isn’t synonymous with catastrophe, nor does it describe a dreadful future, although many cultural references and mainstream media sources might have us think so. *Apocalypso* simply means to lift the veil; to reveal the truth. Living in a time of apocalypse means to see, or at least begin to see, things for how they truly are. It’s a threshold, an occasion which often calls for a reckoning with hard truths. In this sense we’re living in an apocalypse now and do well to call it as such.

But plenty of Christian theology would have us think this reckoning won’t come until the end (capital E-End). Cheap construals of hope attempt to drown out Earth’s moans of pain and shouts of fear, the travail of Romans 8, with louder plentitudes of a promised new heaven and new earth. These thin theologies are replicable (not to

<sup>7</sup> *Earth’s Climate Crisis* (Chicago: Division for Church in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2023).

mention profitable) in forms of Christian pop culture, ranging from radio to lawn art. They proliferate messages of Earth as ultimately inhospitable to spiritual life, and they reify what South African theologian J.F. Durand called problematic futurologies. Far from anti-fragile, these theologies tokenize hope by consistently separating the self from the world rather than underscoring humanity's utter interdependence with Earth's beings and systems. Take for example the contemporary Christian band Building 429's repeating stanza in their hit song, "Where I Belong."

All I know is I'm not home yet.  
This is not where I belong.  
Take this world and give me Jesus.

Moltmann had it right when he said, "Every Christian ethics is determined by a presupposed eschatology."<sup>8</sup> That is, Christian moral norms are shaped by what Christians believe will take place in the end. And while the church must always seek to be a bearer of hope it can never calculate or promise what will happen, as God is the future and comes to us full of surprises. What is assured is not salvation on a new planet or in a new realm, but rather the presence of God itself. And how does the Christian best understand God's presence but by way of the cross. In Durand's words "the church becomes the bearer of this hope by sharing in the suffering and the need of the downtrodden, marginalized and oppressed."<sup>9</sup>

Writing in the mid-1980s, Durand was particularly interested in human suffering under the regime of apartheid. But as I've discussed elsewhere, Christian solidarity with the oppressed must not be limited to the human realm because you and I *are* nature. We are intricately tangled up with the materiality of others, be they rocks or microbes, plants or technologies, animals or humans, etc. Sharing in suffering, therefore, extends beyond our social relations. And this is key, because historically Christian theology has been incredibly anthropocentric in scope. Even if not all bad, as is the case with stewardship of the land theologies that call humans to be better caretakers of Earth, Christian theology has long upheld neo-Platonic distinctions between subject

<sup>8</sup> Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in "Reimagining Hope with and Like Children" in *Child Theology*, ed. Marcia Bunge (New York: Orbis, 2021), 221–222.

(read human) and object (read everything else). Even recent iterations of Christian ecotheologies focus upon either the social ramifications of ecological rupture or the so-called “environmental” impacts upon entities such as land, animal welfare, etc. Too few Christian theologies expansively consider the interrelated suffering of Earth and Earth’s people. But, for our Christian communities to cultivate anti-fragile hope and live into it we must peel back the curtain, acknowledge this *kairos* moment, and see things for how they really are.

## PULLING BACK THE VEIL

There is no lack of bad news. Recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (or the IPCC) indicate things are only getting worse. To be fair, climate change isn’t equivocal with ecological decline. Climate change is a part of that puzzle, but regard for Earth must also consider planetary boundaries such as biodiversity loss, pollution, ocean acidification and rising sea levels, deforestation, etc. It’s just that climate change is, as philosopher Stephen Gardiner says, “the perfect moral storm.” This is because climate change is a dispersive problem and therefore harder to address in local ways. It’s also intergenerational, which makes moral culpability and agency difficult to pinpoint. Climate change makes other environmental challenges, like those mentioned above, more intense. It is, as evangelical scientist Katherine Hayhoe says, a threat multiplier.<sup>10</sup>

Since its first assessment cycle began in 1988 the IPCC has produced six major reports. Currently in its seventh cycle of study, I’m personally pleased to see the panel including more diverse forms of knowledge. For example, at the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the IPCC in Bulgaria this past summer the Panel adopted a decision to include more research methodologies, including regional approaches, Indigenous Knowledge, practitioner expertise, and city networks.<sup>11</sup> It takes a big tent of ideas and ways of knowing to address our present challenges. IPCC reports inform decision-makers as they craft future practices

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Hayhoe, in *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation*, ed. Kiara Jorgenson and Alan Padgett (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020); xvi.

<sup>11</sup> “Decisions adopted by the Panel,” *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2024. [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2024/10/IPCC-61\\_decisions\\_adopted\\_by\\_the\\_Panel.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2024/10/IPCC-61_decisions_adopted_by_the_Panel.pdf).

and policies. But to do this well the IPCC's work also includes a deep look backwards to "understand and learn from the past global climate, hazards, crises, socioeconomic developments."<sup>12</sup> In other words, while the IPCC is far from theologically inclined, serious attention to the pain of the past is foregrounded in suggestions for the future. The principle of hope through tears applies even in the analysis of big data.

Above are what many environmentalists call the "hockey stick" graphs, produced by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, a group that historically supports the work of the IPCC. Every graph begins with the conventional date for the onset of the Industrial Revolution (1750). The graphs measure widely disparate subjects, but what's clear across the board is acceleration. The IPCC's most recent report in 2021 warns:

Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least midcentury under all emissions scenarios considered. Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.<sup>13</sup>

Practically speaking, this means by the year 2040 human communities will experience the following:

- Irreversible loss of the Greenland ice sheet will likely lead to unprecedented rises in sea levels, devastating life in coastal areas and low-lying islands.
- 6 percent of insects, 8 percent of plants and 4 percent of vertebrates are estimated to lose half of their native geographic range; long-term loss of species is likely to result.
- Net production of cereal crops, such as maize, rice and wheat, will decrease while food scarcity increases, particularly in Africa.

<sup>12</sup> "Decisions adopted by the Panel."

<sup>13</sup> "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis," *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>.

- Vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, are said to increase and will impact populations in a more expansive geographical range.
- The poorest countries in the tropics and the southern hemisphere subtropics will bear the brunt of economic decline in relation to the rising costs of climate adaptation.

I wish it were otherwise, but I'll confess—when I take the time to reflect on these statistics my already present affliction of the “green blues” worsens. And because I work with young adults in an undergraduate setting, I'm increasingly aware of the psychological impacts of this bad news.<sup>14</sup>

Entering our twenty-first century lexicon are terms speaking to these maladies. Some include climate anxiety (also called eco-anxiety), solastalgia, climate/environmental grief, and psychoterratic syndromes. The American Psychological Association's (APA) 2022 report, “Mental Health and Our Changing Climate,” defines eco-anxiety as “chronic fear of environmental doom.”<sup>15</sup> As practical theologian Joyce Ann Mercer notes, “The concept of eco-anxiety arose to characterize the range of human emotional responses that include high levels of worry, fear, despair, sorrow, grief, depression, and existential anxiety felt in relation to ecological destruction and environmentally-related stressors.”<sup>16</sup>

Stanford University's Center for Innovation in Global Health is leading some of these studies. One of its fellows, Britt Wray, studies eco-anxiety in Generation Z (1997–2012). Her research indicates that 46 percent of Gen Z believe their daily lives are negatively impacted by eco-anxiety. Those who regularly use social media experience the doom even more intensely. When Wray was asked about the results she offered this surprising response:

It's incredibly sad to hold that statistic in your heart and realize what it means that so many people are walking

<sup>14</sup> See this issue's “Seeds of Change: How Young Adults in the ELCA are Cultivating Hope amidst Eco-Anxiety” article, authored by two of my students, for a greater sense of this.

<sup>15</sup> S. Clayton, C.M. Manning, A. N. Hill, M. Speiser, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Children and Youth Report 2023* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica Mental Health and Our Changing Climate, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Joyce Mercer, “Children and Climate Anxiety: An Ecofeminist Practical Theological Perspective,” in *Religions* 13 no. 2 (2022), 4.

around feeling that way about their own future... But I don't think they're overreacting. They are seeing things getting worse and harder.

And there it is—apocalypse. Beginning to see things as they truly are. Wray goes on:

Grief comes from a deep state of caring. These emotions are a sign of our connection to things that are beyond ourselves—to other species, wild places, generations yet unborn, and to the vulnerable communities that will be impacted the worst. It's actually a very good thing...and anger can be hugely motivating. When it is based in a real sense of injustice, it shows that your conscience is alive, that your sense of being morally transgressed is intact. It can breed a very deep well of strength from which to act.<sup>17</sup>

Loss and grief. Worry and anger. These are not deficits; things to quickly get over or move beyond. They can be fuel for a revolution. They are essential ingredients toward building a more anti-fragile hope; a hope that can bear loss and construct new meaning out of fragmented and diminished worlds.

## THE ROLE OF LITURGY IN THE HOLY PRACTICE OF LAMENT

I often consult with church communities as they journey toward greater ecological awareness and action. And in these settings, I regularly use the work of Buddhist practitioner Joanna Macy and practices developed by her group the Work that Reconnects Network (WRN). The guiding principles of WRN require deep attention to pain toward the aim of sustained, embodied hope. As I've undertaken this work with congregations, I've come to recognize similar attention in early Christian liturgies, rich traditions that name and re-member loss.

As I write, the church turns into the third week of Advent. In some worship settings the candle lit on the third Sunday of Advent is pink, signifying Gaudete Sunday or the "Day of Rejoicing in Love."

<sup>17</sup> Richard Schiffman, "For Gen Z, Climate Change Is a Heavy Emotional Burden," *Yale Environment* 360, April 28, 2022: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/for-gen-z-climate-change-is-a-heavy-emotional-burden>.

The day and spoken liturgy takes its common name from the Latin word for “rejoice,” as referenced in Philippians 4:4-6; “Rejoice in the Lord always;” the Apostle Paul implores, “Again I say rejoice. Let your forbearance be known to all, for the LORD is near at hand; have no anxiety about anything, but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.” This third Sunday of rejoicing marks the time where Christians turn from an early Advent posture of soberness and solemnity, akin to what is practiced in the Lenten season, to a posture of expectation and delight. The love and joy that is characteristic of the last two weeks of Advent is foregrounded with a recognition of pain, suffering and loss. Liturgically speaking, hope includes a reckoning with grief.

Advent, meaning coming or arrival, kicks off the Christian year with an offering of hope; a kind of first fruit. In ancient agrarian communities like those described in the Torah, families were obligated to offer initial grains, fruits, even livestock out of gratitude to God. Even if blight came tomorrow, harvest was offered today. And this too is the principle of Advent; hope offered today, even if tomorrow looks bleak. It can be tentative hope. It can be brazen and bold hope. What matters is not what a person puts their hope in or what they might hope for. No, what makes the first fruits of Advent powerful is the doing of it, the act of hope itself. Having hope has less to do with waiting for external agencies—God even—to bring about what we desire and more to do with acting upon what we would like to see redeemed.

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As Christian communities uphold these liturgical seasons and enact rituals related to them, it’s imperative that we acknowledge where we begin. Not all of us come to the business of hope from the same place. The emotional currency folks spend to act in hope isn’t drawn from equal coffers. As I try to listen to and learn from those who have personally experienced generational environmental apartheid and those trying to breathe under the slow lynching of climate

violence, I'd say hope looks more like mitigation than celebration, more like making reparations than party preparations. As a result, a question I'm asking is whether and how our liturgies might speak more honestly about this. Can they make more space for the tears of particular peoples?

Scholar of liturgical theologies and ritual Claudio Carvalhaes believes liturgies can. He puts it this way, "The task of public liturgical theology is to honor God and each other, restituting those who were stolen from, giving possession to the dispossessed, bringing life to those who are dead, and giving justice and peace to situations of inequality and despair."<sup>18</sup> If this is true, liturgies shouldn't be confined to poems published in clerical books.<sup>19</sup> As Twin Cities-based liturgist Rev. Meta Carlson Herrick says, many of the most original liturgies are hyper-local, rarely known outside the context in which they were written. And I would add to this that liturgies are authored by the priesthood of all believers in all kinds of settings: youth slam poetry competitions, community gardens, hospice rooms, and prison cells. To enact hope as lament, we need to expand our understanding of worship, our definitions of liturgy, and allow more voices to thicken our understanding of hope by sharing their pain.

Examples of this exist, although they don't yet abound. Rev. Carlson Herrick's work is exemplary. Notably her recent place-based liturgy "Peace of the Prairie: A Liturgy for Here and Now," empowers the dispossessed and leads Christians with settler-colonial ancestries into greater understanding, reflection, and action.<sup>20</sup> I too tarry to create such work. One such example was written for my own congregation after convening middle and high school youth to consider Martin Luther's catechism on the Ten Commandments alongside ecological concerns and commitments to land acknowledgement. It is included as an appendix to this article.

Liturgies that build anti-fragile hope do three things: they name what's been lost; they help us labor to remember and count the cost of the loss; and they can call upon the collective to repair what has

<sup>18</sup> Claudio Carvalhaes, *Ritual at World's End: Essays on Eco-Liturgical Liberation Theology* (York, PA: Barber's Son Press, 2021), 156.

<sup>19</sup> A profound example is Marge Piercey's poem, "We Know" in *Made in Detroit* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> Meta Herrick Carlson, "We Remember: A Litany for the Land," *Meta Herrick Carlson*, 2023. <https://www.metaherrickcarlson.com/blog/we-remember-a-litany-for-the-land>.

been lost. I'll conclude this essay with a few reflections on each of these. First, when it comes to naming loss, Christians do well to call upon the wisdom of famed environmental activist Aldo Leopold who rightly said, "We grieve only for what we know."<sup>21</sup> Arguably we know more than ever about the anthropogenic causes of climate change, but research suggests we lack the embodied knowledge to respond in meaningful ways. Cognition isn't knowledge. Experiential and aesthetic ways of knowing account for much. As my own students at St. Olaf recently learned, it's one thing to explain the effects of a leaky Enbridge oil pipe to those distant from the Lake Superior watershed, but it's quite another to reflect on the related, diminished spiritual practices of the Anishinaabe people who depend upon the integrity of those sacred waters. So, if naming loss requires intimate knowledge of what is lost, as Leopold suggests and native water protectors model, then we best pay close attention to the very place we find ourselves and foster greater affection for it. Liturgies can help us do this.

Second, the enactment of hope requires the re-membrance of loss. In their groundbreaking work on grief, German psychologists Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich investigated why the majority of post-WWII Germans were unable to grapple with and mourn the loss and destruction they had endured and inflicted upon others. Their study concluded that when denial and repression of painful memory exists, the compulsion to repeat harmful acts is more likely. To heal we humans need to re-member what has been broken asunder. For hope to grow we must participate in the holy task of witnessing what we have destroyed. Liturgies can also help us do this.

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<sup>21</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand Country Almanac*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 52.

liturgies have largely failed to do this because we've crafted spaces of worship for the church rather than for the world. But, the church faces a Kairos moment, an apocalypse pregnant with potential. Before us there is an opportunity to work toward the common good for all of creation. To name and re-member the loss, yes. But also, to heal and reimagine new worlds. This, I think, is a worthy vision.

Lament must therefore be a practice within the church. It must not be relinquished to a season or an occasion, but rather cast as a life-way. To heed the times and construct antifragile theologies that center the voices of the afflicted, including if not especially those of children, we Christians must honor the pain. Thin and cheap hope packed in false futures and fake Gospels leave us wanting under the weight of hot and weirding planet. What we need now is the collective prophetic imagination of a people who are fueled by a thick and lasting hope, a hope characterized by the gift of tears.

#### CREATION & CONFESSION: A LITANY

Bountiful Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer ✠, all members of Earth exist in you  
and are called to re-member your covenant for creation,  
which promises fruitfulness and blessing for generations to come.

**But we think too much of ourselves, and forget our place in deep time.**

Like so many earthlings,  
we are collective vessels of carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen,  
utterly dependent upon mycelial webs of reciprocity and  
creaturely cultures of care.

**And yet we succumb to narratives of dominion.  
We place ourselves above nature, rather than understanding ourselves as nature.**

Most merciful God,  
We regret the ways we've cast beauty, lives, and biotic  
communities as 'natural resources' at our disposal,

and we lament the violence wrought by this species-centered thinking.

We sense your sighs as Earth travails and we long to be better kin.

**And yet, we persist. We center ourselves again and again.  
We trade the truth of interdependence for the lie of  
independence,  
and value tales of progress over process.**

As a result, forests fall.

Oceans rise. Species vanish.

Viruses emerge. Soils fail.

Invasives prosper. Fires burn.

And rivers run dry.

But gracious Lord, as with matter in your cosmos,  
nothing is wasted.

Dead decay and detritus have a purpose in you.

So, send your Spirit of conviction afresh.

**Help us resist forces of willful distraction.  
Grow in us habits of wonder, gratitude, and contentedness.  
Empower us to recognize and re-member systems of  
exploitation,  
and help us, your church, restore unto you the joy of  
salvation for all of creation. Amen. ☩**

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