

# FAITHFUL RESILIENCE

A 6-PART GUIDE TO BUILDING SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL, AND SOCIAL  
CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY



# Introduction

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## Why this guide?

The climate crisis has arrived. Faith communities must not only react, but also prepare.

Over the last decade, hurricanes have intensified, wildfires have burnt stronger, and heat waves have baked our cities. These events can only be expected to get worse in the next decades. Most of our faith communities are not ready for these climate-driven disasters. Yet, the communities who will be most threatened by climate change also have an opportunity to play a pivotal role in building resilience in their towns and cities. Whether a church community has a large facility, land, social capital, or something else, those assets can be channeled into building climate resilience in preparation for the coming physical and spiritual storms of the climate crisis.

## What is Climate Resilience?

Pathways to Resilience, a community-based collaborative effort to build resilience in U.S. institutions defines resilience as “bouncing forward to eradicate the inequities and unsustainable resource use at the heart of climate crisis.”<sup>1</sup> This definition of resilience, which expands the traditional definition of “bouncing back” from a stressor or disaster resonates with the Christian mission of our churches: to build a Beloved Community, the Kingdom of Heaven, here on earth.<sup>2</sup> Resilience, far from being a singular issue, involves social, physical, and spiritual factors playing together in concert.

Climate resilience is defined by the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions as “the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Improving climate resilience involves assessing how climate change will create new, or alter current, climate-related risks, and taking steps to better cope with these risks.”<sup>3</sup>

In preparation for the social, physical and spiritual storms of the climate crisis, faith communities must take a proactive stance towards resilience. As you go through this guide, consider how you are anticipating, preparing for, and “bouncing forward” into a just, sustainable, and resilient community.

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<sup>1</sup> Pathways to Resilience. <https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/Pathways-to-resilience-2015.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Beloved Community is a term popularized by Martin Luther King Jr. that refers to a world “in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth.” More at [thekingcenter.org](http://thekingcenter.org).

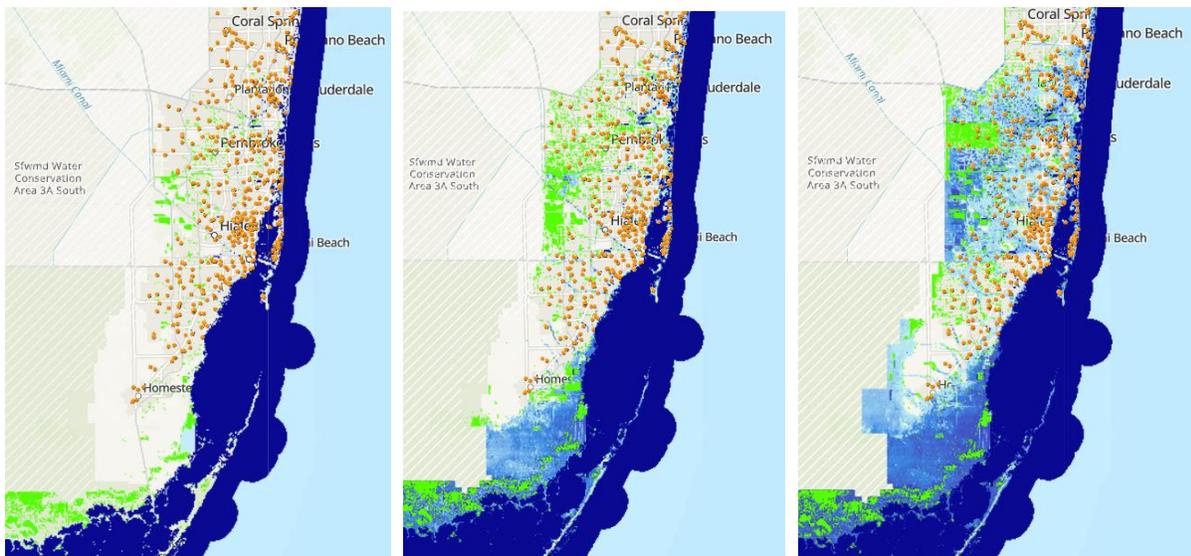
<sup>3</sup> Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. [www.c2es.org/](http://www.c2es.org/)

### Author's Context: East Coast Sea Level Rise

This guide includes useful general information about climate resilience from a faith perspective, and it is also written by an author with a particular location and perspective. As a student at Duke Divinity School and a participant in the Southeast Faith Leaders Network, I offer this guide from the context of concern about sea level rise and storm surges on the East Coast.

I have spent significant time examining what it would look like for the Church to commit itself to resilience and prepare for the inevitability of climate changes. This question is particularly important for churches along the East coast, where sea level rise and intensifying storms present a different reality in the next decades.

Below are three images of Southeastern Florida (Miami-Ft. Lauderdale are) that demonstrate the challenges facing congregations in the next 40-80 years. The dark blue area represents current sea level and the light blue color within the land area represents water inundation at high tide. Every orange dot is a congregation. According to the National Climate Assessment<sup>4</sup>, sea levels could rise as much as 3 ft. by 2060 and more than 6 ft. by 2100. The result is the inundation of entire communities not only in Miami, but along the entire East Coast.



Current Sea Level

3 ft. Sea Level Rise (2060)

6 ft. Sea Level Rise (2100)

These pictures are from [creationjustice.org/sealevelrise](https://creationjustice.org/sealevelrise). Visit the site and search your congregation.

If your congregation will be underwater, the implications are clear: the physical land where this congregation sits will be inundated by sunny-day flooding and storm surge, becoming inaccessible and unviable over the next 50 years. You should consider what that means for your congregation and broader community. How can you shepherd conversations around resilience and retreat, and how can you meet the physical needs of people who are being flooded and displaced?

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<sup>4</sup> National Climate Assessment

If your congregation will not be underwater, but is in a community that will be flooded, there are profound missional implications for your church. How can you leverage your geographical privilege and institutional assets to support the drowning community around you?

### **How to use this guide**

This guide is intended to start you down the path of addressing the above questions. It is also intended to be flexible for the needs of your congregation. It can be used as a 6-week sermon series incubator, bible study lesson plan, or social justice issue guide. This six-part guide will serve to start a conversation in your congregation about climate change and resilience. Throughout, follow-up resources, opportunities for action, and long-term visioning exercises are included so that this six-part series is not the end of climate resilience in your church. After all, resilience is a collective process and attitude, not a concrete issue.

Each week has five sections: Theological Underpinning, Guiding Questions, What Can My Church Do?, More Resources, and Spotlight.

Theological Underpinning: Each part offers a biblical passage and short reflection to prompt thoughtful consideration of how that week's theme relates to the narrative of our faith.

Guiding Questions: Guiding questions throughout this guide are intended to either be used in small group discussion or as launching points for sermon-writing. They are divided into four categories, each of which represents an important Biblical concept and much-needed values for resilience:

- Think 1000 years back - Our culture is present-obsessed. Thankfully our Christian traditions often root us in the depth of history. These questions are intended to delve deeper, yet, into the history of land, tradition, community, and creatures.
- Think 100 years ahead - Thinking 100 years ahead may be even harder than thinking 1000 years back. Yet, imagining the future is an integral part to creating the future we want and bringing the Kingdom of God to earth. These questions are intended to spark that process of creating futures, ones that are clean, loving, and just.
- Come Into the Watershed - Your watershed is the area of land in which you are situated which all drains into one body of water. Watershed communities, not political boundaries, are true to our interdependence on other human and nonhuman creatures around us. These questions are intended to look more deeply into the community of life -- both human and nonhuman -- that lives in your watershed.
- Speak Truth to Power - This phrase originated with the Quakers as a non-violent political tactic. Engagement with political forces that create systems of oppression and opportunity must be an integral part of Christian witness. The only way to support true resilience for all is to proactively counteract race and class inequities. These questions are intended to urge advocacy for more just policies around climate change and resilience.

What Can My Church Do?: This section offers a few recommendations of practical steps you can take in your congregation to integrate the resilience theme of each part.

Resources: Here you will find resources for further study. These will be particularly helpful for pastors preparing a sermon or small group leaders preparing a bible study to dive more deeply into the theme of the week.

Spotlight: Nearly every week includes a spotlight on a community that has demonstrated commitment to resilience through the theme of the week. These are inspirational stories of churches that have become

hubs of resilience in different ways. These can also be fruitful places to find anecdotes for sermons or small group studies.

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# The Land We Inhabit

How can we change how we treat our land to care for our neighbors and build resilience?

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*“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”*

- Matthew 13:31-32

The land that our churches inhabit is holy land. The seeds we sow -- both literally and metaphorically -- can flourish into beautiful hubs of life and diversity long after we leave. This page is intended to aid your congregation in considering the stewardship of its land as an act of worship to God and an act of resilient care for the human and nonhuman community.

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## **Use these questions and prompts in conversation about stewardship of your holy ground:**

### Think 1000 years back:

Learn about the original peoples of your community:

Find federal and state recognized tribes through the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#). [Learn about their historical and current relationship with the land.](#)

Use this [Native Land map](#) to learn about the indigenous caretakers of the land you inhabit, and, if applicable, where their descendants may reside today

### Think 100 years ahead

How will this land look in 100 years?

How can our decisions about this land today support healing from racism?

How will the way we steward our land now reverberate and grow over the next 100 years?

### Come into the watershed

Look up your watershed [here](#). How big is it? What other congregations are in my watershed? Is it impaired?

Who in my watershed has access to greenspace? Who does not? How can we shrink that gap?

What actions can we take to improve the health of our watershed?

Familiarize yourself with the [endangered species in your area](#).

Familiarize yourself with [native plants and species in your area](#) (link); plan a garden that benefits the native and endangered species in your area.

### Speak truth to power

Learn who your local, state, and federal elected officials are. Notice whether and how these elected officials reflect, respect, and engage your local community – or not.

How are policies affecting how we use our land, and who benefits from our land? For example, who is enriched and who is impoverished by policies that allow leasing public lands for fossil fuel extraction? Who incentives and benefits from unsustainable local development, and what human and non-human communities pay the externalized costs?

How can we advocate for more socially equitable and ecologically sustainable development as well as land-use measures?

### What can my church do?

- Consider beginning meetings with an acknowledgement of local history that may include some variation of the following: *"We are grateful to be gathered here in the \_\_\_\_\_ watershed, which we share with a diversity of plants and creatures, including \_\_\_\_\_ (name a few species). In a spirit of reverence and healing, we acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Indigenous) peoples, and this (building/city) was (built/enriched) by people of African descent who were enslaved against their will from \_\_\_\_\_ (years). May our words and actions heal and nurture our relationship with all our neighbors, and uphold our shared responsibilities to one another, in this watershed where we gather today."*
- Research whether there is any effort toward land reparations in your community, and how your church might support it. Land reparations may include initiatives such as land title return<sup>5</sup>, land stewardship and decision-making rights, and farming opportunities.
- Consider the collective memory held by your land, as well as whether and how your faith community might foster a spirit of healing through commemoration. (Consider the example of the Sand Creek Massacre atonement and healing initiatives in the United Methodist Church.<sup>6</sup>)
- Consider how your church can provide for a community's need for greenspace.<sup>7</sup>
- Replace paved surfaces with permeable ones
- Instead of lawn, plant native vegetation and/or use your space to grow food.
- Build a rain garden
- If you're on the water, partner with a local organization to install natural adaptation solutions, like oyster beds and sea grass.

### More Resources:

- [For More on Place-Based Care for Creation, visit Creation Justice Ministries' Sense of Place resource.](#)
- [Our Watershed Moment](#), a toolkit by Eco-Faith Network of the ELCA Minneapolis-St. Paul Synod
- [Fund for Sacred Places](#)
- [National Congress of American Indians](#)
- [Watershed Discipleship Blog](#)
- Book: *Watershed Discipleship*, edited by Ched Myers. This compilation of writings by young faith-rooted activists provides examples of how people are practicing bioregional spirituality in communities across the United States.

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<sup>5</sup> United Methodists Return Lands in Ohio to the Wyandotte People, Held in Trust for 176 Years <https://www.umcmmission.org/share-our-work/news-stories/2019/september/united-methodists-return-lands-in-ohio-to-the-wyandotte-people-held-in-trust-for-176-years>

<sup>6</sup> United Methodist Responses to the Sand Creek Massacre. <https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/united-methodist-responses-to-the-sand-creek-massacre-3328>

<sup>7</sup> Historic Kalamazoo Church to Be Demolished for Urban Nature Playground. <https://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/2019/01/historic-kalamazoo-church-to-be-demolished-for-urban-nature-playground.html>

## Spotlight: St. Luke's Eastport Episcopal Church, Annapolis, MD

WERE IT NOT for the “Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner Tonight!” banner and obligatory “Episcopal church in 1 mile” sign, you could drive past St. Luke's Episcopal Church and miss the building entirely. Obscured behind a line of oaks and a hillock of native hydrangea, the sanctuary almost disappears into the landscape. For Rev. Diana Carroll, that's the hope.

When Carroll moved to Annapolis, Md., in 2012 to serve St. Luke's, the four acres behind the church, which abuts Back Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake, were a tangled mess of brush. The church had planned to clear that land to build a large sanctuary and convert the current structure into an education building, but Carroll and members of the St. Luke's Green Team suggested St. Luke's keep its current sanctuary and use the five acres as “a sanctuary without walls.” As Carroll envisioned it, if the church restored the land, it would still be “a sacred space as had always been dreamed about for that location.”



For years, St. Luke's has been involved in climate action, integrating climate literacy into its preaching and education while advocating for stronger climate policy at the Maryland State House. So in 2017, when the 120-person congregation received a total of nearly \$2 million in grants—largely from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, plus small grants and donations through the church—to restore wetlands and a buried stream on their property that drained into Back Creek, they realized the project was a physical expression of their commitment to earthkeeping. With the help of an ecological restoration company, they coaxed back to the surface the stream that had been diverted through stormwater pipes and built a cascading streambed, with step pools and weirs—low dams to slow water flow—to filter the water as it makes its way toward Back Creek. They named the restored stream Bowen's Branch, after a late congregant who cared deeply about watershed stewardship in Annapolis.

When I visited St. Luke's in 2019, Carroll and I followed the curve of the stream to its mouth, which is now a living shoreline, a small coastal edge made of native plants and natural materials rather than a concrete seawall. In an age of climate crisis, marshes like this one are critical: As sea levels rise, marshes engage in a kind of dance with the rising tides through a process called accretion. This is especially important in a place like Annapolis, where waters breaching sea walls and submerging parking lots, roads, and sidewalks has become a frequent problem (only four such events were recorded in the early 1960s, compared to 63 in 2017). When the dock in downtown Annapolis floods, explained Carroll, the church's marsh helps absorb the extra water. The marsh is also a carbon sink, more effective at sequestering carbon than the equivalent area of dry land.

By restoring their land to serve its intended purpose, the church created a climate sanctuary: absorbing higher tides, filtering polluted stormwater from extreme rain events, hosting displaced creatures, and drawing carbon out of the air. And while St. Luke's sanctuary is high enough above sea level to be outside the floodplain, the same is not true for all Annapolis residents. The church is in solidarity with those neighbors, absorbing the water their houses cannot, holding a space for lament when devastation comes, and advocating for equitable climate solutions—an ecotone where the meditative ebb of human action meets the flow of steadily rising tides.

Before I leave St. Luke's, Rev. Carroll tells me that the climate crisis and St. Luke's response has strengthened her conviction that God uses the most unexpected people to do God's work. "No one would have expected that such a small, financially struggling congregation as ours would have engaged in a \$2 million project to do something that on the surface doesn't actually benefit us. And yet it's so clearly part of God's mission in the world and God's desire for the healing of the world."

*Text shared from Sojourners (<https://sojo.net/magazine/april-2020/how-three-coastal-churches-became-hubs-climate-resilience>)*

*Image from St. Luke's Restoration of Nature (<http://www.stlukeseastport.org/environmental-ministry>)*

# The Fierce Urgency of Now

How can we create a just and beautiful world for our neighbors, now and into the future?

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“...and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams”

- Acts 2:17b

This moment is different. The impacts of our actions over the next 10 years will reverberate in God’s Creation over the following centuries. We are in a *kairos* moment. *Kairos* time -- different from our normal conception of *chronos* time -- is understood as “a propitious moment for decision or action.” It is the moment when the actions of God and God’s people align to change the unjust systems of our world. This *Kairos* time is a moment to prophesy, see visions, and dream for a just, clean, and equitable Creation. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that to prevent the worst effects of climate change for our local and global neighbors, we must make unprecedented changes in the next decade. Thankfully, the Church knows about unprecedented change. Throughout the Bible, God works through God’s people to disrupt oppressive systems and make unprecedented changes in our way of being together. The climate crisis has arrived, but its worst impacts can be prevented if we take meaningful action now. May the prophecies, visions, and dreams of climate justice be made realities in our churches and communities.

The action we take now can save millions of lives and create a beautiful world for the next generations.

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## Use these questions and prompts in conversation about taking action on climate change:

- Think more than 1,000 years back
  - Refer to Creation Justice Ministries’ [Fierce Urgency of Now resource](#) for Biblical insights on generational justice and this *kairos* moment.
  - While the climate crisis did not exist before the Industrial Revolution, ecological crises did. Consider revisiting the Book of Isaiah<sup>8</sup>, or the fate of the cedars of Lebanon<sup>9</sup>.
- Think 100 years ahead
  - Without action on the climate crisis, what kind of world will our descendants inherit?
  - Look at your region in the [National Climate Assessment](#). How will it be impacted by climate change?
  - How can you make changes in your congregation to lower your climate impact?
- Come into the watershed
  - Look at the [Oil and Gas Threat Map](#) and [the Toxic Sites Map](#) to see whether public lands near you are threatened by fossil fuel infrastructure or toxic dumping. Be especially watchful of areas that are vulnerable to climate disaster.
  - Look at the CJM Sea Level Rise Map. Along the coast, what difference will 3 ft. vs. 6 ft. of sea level rise make? If your watershed is along the coast, how will the different levels affect your community

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<sup>8</sup> <https://collegevilleinstitute.org/bearings/inhabiting-eden/>

<sup>9</sup> Ched Myers offers “a look at Isaiah, the ancient imperial assault on the cedars of Lebanon, and today’s forest martyrs.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWOYSIBqEqw>

- Speak truth to power
  - How are public lands being used in my area to create natural resilience, or not?
  - What are your municipal, county, and state laws on clean energy and climate change? How can you advocate for stronger ones?

### What can my church do?

- Help others feel the urgency by using your public voice! You can do so by highlighting the deadliness of climate disasters, including health issues related to flooding and toxic chemical exposure, or wildfires and asthma.
- Connect with a local environmental justice organization. Partner with them on a project or learn about the justice issues in your community.

### More Resources

- [Faith Leader's Guide to the 4th National Climate Assessment](#) (Energy and Ecology Working Group of Washington Inter-religious Staff Community)
- [Interfaith Power & Light](#)
- [Global Weirding](#) videos from Katharine Hayhoe
- [Climate and Church: How Global Climate Change Will Impact Core Church Ministries \(Creation Justice Ministries, formerly the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program\)](#)
- [Summary of 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report](#) (Energy and Ecology Working Group of Washington Inter-religious Staff Community)

### Spotlight: The Story of Renewable Natick

Natick, MA, a suburb of Boston, is a town that recently hired a Sustainability Coordinator to help reduce energy waste, boost recycling and composting, and in other ways increase the town's sustainability. In the fall of 2017, Jillian Wilson-Martin, Natick's Sustainability Coordinator, organized a local screening of Al



Gore's "An Inconvenient Sequel," which describes the severity of the climate crisis and the urgency of acting now to prevent a worst case scenario. As a local faith leader known for speaking out about environmental justice, I was asked to be on the panel for the Q & A after the screening.

At the end of the film, Al Gore challenges the audience to transition their church, their school, their company, their town, or their city to 100% renewable energy. During the Q & A, I asked the question, "Can Natick do this?" Jillian's answer was, "Yes, but I can't do it alone."

I am the pastor of Common Street Spiritual Center in Natick, MA an experimental interfaith church associated with the American Baptist Churches USA. We are a community that believes a more

sustainable and peaceful world is possible, and we also believe in being the change we want to see in the world.

In partnership with the First Congregational Church in Natick, we launched a campaign called “Renewable Natick” in February of 2018, with a goal of moving our town into a 100% clean energy future. Faith communities have a unique ability to speak to moral issues such as the climate crisis, and inspire people to come together and take action. We have spiritual language and practices that help people discover a sense of calling, of conviction, and of partnering with God in the struggle for justice. We also know how to build communities of trust and action.

Renewable Natick has brought together a community of activists who have been working hand in hand with our Sustainability Coordinator and Sustainability Committee to move our town as rapidly as possible away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy. At Natick’s 2018 Fall Town Meeting, Renewable Natick brought a resolution to the floor which called for a transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions, in the public and private sectors, by 2050. For months prior to the meeting we lobbied local town meeting members and other elected officials, and worked behind the scenes to wordsmith the resolution and build public support. My speech in favor of the resolution, before Town Meeting, could be considered my most important sermon of 2018. The resolution passed resoundingly at Town Meeting, with a vote of 88 to 12, and enlarged the moral legitimacy and urgency of local efforts to address the climate crisis.

Since then, our story of local advocacy for climate justice has continued. Renewable Natick has been continuing its work, and our church has also been instrumental in the development of a regional hub of the Sunrise Movement, which is a powerful youth-led movement for climate and economic justice. In general, our church has become an anchor institution and support for local movements for environmental and social justice.

Churches and other faith communities have historically been major drivers of social change. This is true all over the world. In United States history faith communities provided leadership for the civil rights movement and the abolition movement, for worker justice movements, peace movements, and in the movement for LGBTQ rights. Faith communities have the moral authority to speak out when the status quo needs to be changed, and to cast alternative societal visions that look more like what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

We are facing an environmental crisis that includes super storms and extreme weather from a destabilized climate, unsafe and overpriced drinking water, habitat destruction and species extinction, and toxic pollution that threatens the most vulnerable communities. Each community of faith, in its own context, can discover an environmental justice calling. We can come together to speak out, organize people, and accelerate the pace of change towards what is right and good and pleasing in the sight of God, the Creator and Sustainer of Life.

*Shared with Creation Justice Ministries for Earth Day Sunday 2020 by Rev. Dr. Ian Mevorach, Co-Founder and Spritual Leader of Common Street Spiritual Center. Direct questions to [ian@commonstreet.org](mailto:ian@commonstreet.org).*

*Image from [natickma.gov/sustainability](http://natickma.gov/sustainability).*

# Resilience and Restoration

How can we prepare to support our local community in climate disasters?

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*Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace. Then They said, “Let us start building!” So they committed themselves to the common good.*

- Nehemiah 2:17, 18

*Resilience is defined as “bouncing forward to eradicate the inequities and unsustainable resource use at the heart of climate crisis.”*

*Climate Change Mitigation + Adaptation + Deep Democracy = Resilience*

- [Pathways to Resilience](#)

Our natural response to disaster is to rebuild. In fact, that’s precisely what the book of Nehemiah is all about: rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem after its destruction. Rebuilding gives us a sense of safety. It gives us a sense of normalcy. After any major disaster it is political suicide for leaders to say anything but “we will rebuild!”

And yet, in the midst of rebuilding, we often fail to ask the questions: what caused the disaster in the first place? How might rebuilding be a process of undoing systems that are failing our community? If we do rebuild, how can we make changes that ensure we are creating a just and equitable community?

The climate crisis forces us to confront questions of rebuilding both our physical buildings and our social systems. While physical infrastructure gets a large slice of attention from resilience experts, social capital is shown to have a larger impact on a community’s ability to bounce forward from a disaster.<sup>10</sup> Our churches are often hubs of social capital and centers of a community. As such, they play a crucial role in preparing for the disasters that are likely to come our way. How are we building social and physical structures that will deepen community connectedness and aid in response to the climate crisis? The climate crisis will continue to bring slow and fast disasters to our community. Rather than reacting to crisis and rebuilding, our churches should be proactive in building resilience that can support both the physical and spiritual needs of our communities.

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## **Use these questions in conversation about resilience in your community:**

### Think 1,000 years back

How has the human community of your place changed over the last 1,000 years? How has it changed in the last hundred years? 10 years?

Who has benefited from those changes? Who has been devastated from those changes?

What disasters have occurred in your community in the last 100 years? The last 10 years?

### Think 100 years ahead

Envision a flourishing community 100 years from today: what does that look like? What is the role of your congregation in that flourishing?

If your community is at high risk of inundation from sea level rise, what might it look like to begin moving away from the coast to higher land?

### Come into the watershed

Look up your watershed. What neighborhoods, towns, cities do you share your watershed with?

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<sup>10</sup> Aldrich and Meyer, 2014. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002764214550299>

How do you define your community?

How would your role as community caretaker change if it were expanded to include other creatures?

Where is local food production happening in your watershed?

Speak truth to power

Like the spotlight story of Crosstowne, are there unsustainable policies and practices occurring in your community? What assets of your congregation might be utilized in changing those practices?

**What can my church do?**

- Develop a resilience and disaster preparedness plan for your church. Then, invite your congregants to develop a resilience and disaster preparedness plan for their household. The resources below are a great place to start.
- Consider what assets your church has: land, facilities, social capital? Similar to how Crosstowne used its financial assets to advance resilience in Charleston, find a way to leverage your church's assets for community-building, disaster preparedness, and resilience.
- If you're on the water, partner with a local organization to install natural adaptation solutions, like oyster beds, sea grass, or mangroves.
- Build spiritual resilience. Disasters like hurricanes and sea level rise can have significant psychological and spiritual impacts of community members. Often, PTSD can result from going through a traumatic disaster. Attend to the spiritual and psychological needs of your community as these changes occur. Look at common symptoms of trauma to assess your community. Make space for community conversations about the feelings of loss and change. Create rituals that aid in making meaning of the changes.
- If your community is at high risk of inundation from sea level rise, begin community conversations about [managed retreat](#).

**More Resources:**

- [Communities Responding to Extreme Weather \(CREW\): Resilience Planning Resources](#)
- [Steps to Resilience: Community Resilience Toolkit](#)
- [Climate Resilience Chaplaincy](#)
- [Interfaith Summit on Resilience - video](#)
- [Resilient Food System - Earth Day Sunday 2015 materials](#)
- [Communities Responding to Extreme Weather: Interfaith Summit](#)
- [Benefits of a Living Shoreline, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)
- [Damages Done: The Longitudinal Impacts of Natural Hazards on Wealth Inequality in the United States, Social Problems, 2019](#)
- [How Federal Disaster Money Favors The Rich, NPR, 2019](#)

## Spotlight: Crosstowne Church, Charleston, SC

In Charleston, S.C., Paul Rienzo, pastor of Crosstowne Church, sat behind a desk constructed out of a reclaimed door. This door, removed after the first flood at his church, is a daily reminder of the Christian call to reclamation and restoration, Rienzo told me. It is from this desk that Rienzo has worked to reshape the mission of this church in the wake of the extreme flooding the Charleston community has seen in recent years.

Rienzo describes Crosstowne as a “newfangled evangelical” church, a 600-person congregation that is “good for somebody that’s on their third marriage ... good for the doubter, and we’re really good for atheists.” It’s also a church that has flooded three years in a row.



Three hurricanes, in 2015, 2016, and 2017, pummeled Crosstowne, each dumping enough water to require a massive rebuild of the sanctuary. After the third flood, the church interior was rebuilt in two weeks, but the church recognized that rebuilding wasn’t enough. The leadership team at Crosstowne decided to do something unusual for a church: gather scientific data. They hired a hydrology team and an environmental lawyer to analyze the onshore causes of the flooding so that the church could serve as a trustworthy hub of communication with their neighbors and the city.

The study found that as climate change exacerbates rainfall intensity, unsustainable development results in water flowing over concrete rather than percolating into the soil. When rain falls, streets and storm drains are inundated with more water than they can handle, and the excess water ends up 3 feet deep in the sanctuary of Crosstowne. According to the Fourth National Climate Assessment, by the end of the century heavy rainfall events in the Southeast U.S. are expected to double, and the amount of water falling on extreme rain days will increase by 21 percent. As more rain falls on hard surfaces around Charleston, Crosstowne has realized it will be underwater more frequently.

With their data-driven study, Crosstowne became experts on flooding in the area around Charleston’s Church Creek Basin. Rienzo worked with the city to develop new stormwater retention guidelines, reshaping how development is done in Charleston. The benefits of Crosstowne’s work extended beyond its walls, to local homeowners who “were looking at buyouts, flooding, delays,” Rienzo told the local Live 5 News. “So we began to see we were not just doing this study for ourselves. It was a study to do for the community around us.”

While most in the city supported Crosstowne’s efforts, others worried that small-scale, privately funded reports like the church’s study would distract from the need for a comprehensive citywide study. But even in the midst of pressure from many sides to, as Rienzo described, “let the scientists and the politicians do

their job and, you religious folks, you go in the other room and talk about values,” Crosstowne held firm to its conviction that getting involved in policy—even when inconvenient—was an act of faith. “It just seemed like the gospel thing to do,” said Rienzo.

Rienzo continued to tend the spiritual needs of Crosstowne, which included congregants who had been displaced from their own homes in the floods. He led a sermon series on the book of Nehemiah so that the church would see itself “as being a part of a biblical story.”

The eponymous book describes how Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem, a task fraught with conflict from Judah’s enemies. Nevertheless, the people of Jerusalem “committed themselves to the common good” (Nehemiah 2:18), standing shoulder to shoulder, each person building a segment of wall “opposite his house” (3:6-12). For Rienzo, this was an important lesson. “[Nehemiah] got a buy-in from everybody. And so that was one of the important pieces of it: that everybody was going to be a part of this solution together.”

Crossing over the threshold of Crosstowne, I noticed a watermark, 3 feet high on the door. While the rest of the church was renovated, they kept the doors as a reminder of where they have been. As congregants enter the church, they symbolically proclaim a remembrance of the flood, a celebration of Crosstowne’s reclamation, and a recommitment to the work of justice in Charleston.

*Text shared from Sojourners (<https://sojo.net/magazine/april-2020/how-three-coastal-churches-became-hubs-climate-resilience>)*

*Image courtesy of Paul Rienzo*

# Climate Migration

How can we welcome our local and global neighbors who are displaced from the climate crisis?

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*The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.*

- Genesis 18:1-5

*"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*

- Definition of Refugee, 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

*"Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad."*

- Definition of Environmental Migrant, International Organization for Migration

Our churches care deeply about hospitality. When we welcome the stranger or the migrant it is as if we are welcoming the Lord. The passage from Genesis 18:15 and Jesus' admonition in Matthew 25 that just as we treat the least of these, we treat the Lord. God calls our churches and our homes not only to be places of hospitality for those we know and love, but also for our new neighbors, those who are forced to move or migrate due to reasons of persecution or disaster.

The climate crisis is driving migration around the world. As weather patterns become more erratic, bringing drought to some areas and flooding to others, people are forced from their land and community and forced to find refuge elsewhere. These migrants, who are expected to number in the hundreds of millions in the next century, do not have the same protected status of refugees because their situation does not meet the definition of persecution. This makes it easier for countries to reject environmental migrants from the border. Historically, though, the Church has played a huge role in ensuring just policies and welcoming spaces for migrants. Now is the time to extend that same hospitality to climate migrants. This is not merely an international problem. In the United States, the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw band of Indians of the Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana is the first group of climate-displaced people in the United

States.<sup>11</sup> More internally-displaced people are expected to be forced out of their homes along the coasts or in wildfire-risk areas. They will largely settle across the midwest, far from their community and home. Our faith communities can be hubs of hospitality for these neighbors, welcoming them with love and generosity. “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

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### **Use these questions and prompts in guiding a conversation about climate refugees:**

#### Think 1,000 years back

What is the history of welcoming migrants and refugees in your religious tradition?  
How is your church already practicing hospitality?

#### Think 100 years ahead

Look at [this map](#) to see how your county will be affected by climate migration. Will you be directly impacted by sea level rise? How impacted will you be by displaced climate migrants? As many as 30 million climate-displaced migrants could come to the U.S. border over the next 30 years. How is your church preparing to welcome these refugees?  
What small changes can you make in your church to be more welcoming and hospitable to displaced people?  
In the long-term, what large changes can you make?

#### Come into the watershed

Look at [this map](#) to see how nonhuman species migration will be affected by climate change. Does your church fall near a migration thoroughfare? Are they mostly mammals, amphibians, birds, or mammals?  
How might you extend hospitality to include these creatures? How does your land-use reflect that hospitality (for example, do you have native plants instead of a lawn?)

#### Speak truth to power

Contact your policy-makers and ask them to support:  
Buy-out programs for low-income communities affected by severe flooding  
Refugee resettlement programs and a higher quota for refugee acceptance  
A legal definition of Environmental Migrant that grants them access to asylum in the United States

### **What can my church do?**

- Make room for people who might be displaced by disasters. Consider options like:
  - Stocking cots, sheets, toiletries, and non-perishable food
  - Installing showers in some of your bathrooms
  - Working with local emergency management so that people know that can come to you
- Prepare your congregation to welcome migrants from other countries and cultures.
- Encourage collective action and a sense of community by praying together, adopting a spirit of reference to creation and to one another, creating awareness about environmental migrants, sharing knowledge with other local churches and organizations, fostering dialogue and making space to hear community concerns.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sojourners in a New Land: Hope and Adaptive Traditions.  
[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-27205-0\\_7](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-27205-0_7)

<sup>12</sup> [“Climate Refugees: People Displaced by Climate Change and the Role of Churches” from the World Council of Churches](#)

**More Resources:**

- [The Great Climate Migration](#), New York Times Magazine 2020
- [Resettling America's First Climate Refugees](#), New York Times 2016
- [Short film: "The Island President"](#)
- ["Climate Refugees: People Displaced by Climate Change and the Role of Churches" from the World Council of Churches](#)
- [Refugee Worship Service Guide](#), Disciples of Christ Week of Compassion

# Building Resilience

How can our buildings be sanctuaries from climate disasters?

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*Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.*

*Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for [the animals].*

- Genesis 6:14-16, 21

It seems a bit odd that, in a story with as epic proportions as Noah and the Ark, the writer of Genesis chooses to include God's carpentry measurements. What does it matter to us that the Ark had to be constructed of cypress to very precise specifications? Perhaps what God is revealing here is that the way we build our structures and the materials we use to build them *matter* -- especially when a flood is coming.

In the face of an oncoming flood, Noah and his ark played the role of a shepherd, guiding God's people and God's Creation through a transformation into a new kind of community. In that transformation, the build of the Ark was not an afterthought; it was integral to the success of the mission. Without a structurally-sound ship with enough space and facilities for all the creatures, the kind of transformation that occurred through the Ark would have been impossible.

The climate crisis presents disasters that will challenge, threaten, endanger, and transform communities around the world. Yet, churches can be Arks of resilience in the face of these disasters, preparing our buildings like Noah prepared the ark. The physical structure of our buildings matter -- always, but especially now. The climate crisis invites to physically prepare for the oncoming storms, making small and large changes that will create a sanctuary for those directly affected by climate change

By changing how we build and operate our buildings, we can provide a physical refuge for those directly affected by climate change.

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## **Use these questions in conversation about stewardship of your building:**

### Think 1,000 years back

What institutions in your community have been pillars of resilience? Where do people go when disaster strikes?

When was the last major disaster in your community? How did the church respond?

### Think 100 years ahead

Look up your congregation on this [Sea Level Rise Map](#). Will 1 ft of water affect your congregation? 3 ft? 6 ft?

If your congregation is at risk of inundation ...

If your congregation is not at risk of inundation, how close are you to communities that may be underwater?

Read the Resilience Hub checklist from the nonprofit [Communities Responding to Extreme Weather](#). Which of these practices can your congregation implement? Can you commit to becoming a resilience hub?

### Come into the watershed

What local institutions provide resilience for climate disasters? Where do your neighbors go in emergency?

Call the need for climate resilience to the attention of councils of churches, interfaith agencies, ministerial associations and community organizing groups. Leverage existing relational infrastructures to build resilience.

Assess racial and economic equity concerns related to disaster preparedness and resilience.

Develop forums to discern together what can be done in partnership to establish mutual aid as well as promote equity in disaster preparedness and resilience.

### Speak truth to power

Host a community forum with the climate resilience officer of your city, town, or state, and ask them about how they are promoting matters of justice and equity.

Advocate for disaster preparedness and resilience investment. On the Federal level, ask for resilience investment through the Disaster Recovery and Reform Act.

In addition to your own congregation, you have a role in advocating for resilience infrastructure in public buildings. Ask your local leaders to consider installing natural resilience infrastructure like rain gardens and living shorelines and to build or renovate to higher resilience standards.

### **What can my church do?**

- Consider becoming a Resilience Hub with Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW).
- If your church is doing any renovations or new constructions, consider how to choose building materials that are more sustainable and better suited for climate disasters.
- When choosing a building contractor, consider whether the company you choose provides apprenticeships and job opportunities in communities that need it most.

### **Resources:**

[Communities Responding to Extreme Weather \(CREW\)](#)

[How to become a Resilience Hub](#)

[Mennonite Disaster Service Disaster Preparedness Guide](#)

[10 Steps Toward Disaster Preparedness](#)

[A Congregational Guide for Disaster Preparedness and Response](#)

[Webinar: Earthquakes, Floods, and Fires: 4 Practical Steps to Prepare your Church For Disasters You Never Saw Coming](#)

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### **Spotlight: The Empowerment Temple, Baltimore, MD**

**Baltimore, MD** – The Empowerment Temple and its affiliated nonprofit community development corporation, The Economic Empowerment Coalition (TEEC) – both West Baltimore community anchors and forces for local economic development – have partnered with the City of Baltimore to serve as a Resilience Hub for the neighborhood. The Resilience Hub will include one of Maryland’s first combined community solar and battery storage projects, which will deliver on-site green technology training and job opportunities.

Empowerment Temple Church opened its doors in April of 2000 in Baltimore, MD. The church began with just 47 members, and today is acclaimed as one of the fastest-growing African Methodist Episcopal churches in the denomination’s 200-year history. Its congregation has grown to more than 10,000 members with countless others streaming online from around the world. Empowerment’s mission is to

“empower people spiritually, develop them educationally, expose them culturally, activate them politically, and strengthen the economy.”

“This collaboration with Groundswell will continue to further the mission of Empowerment Temple” said Jamal Bryant, who championed the project while serving as Empowerment Temple’s Pastor. “We’re now able to provide clean energy, economic empowerment to the least, left behind and looked over.”

Anthony W. Robinson, Chair of TEEC, says that “Partnering with the City of Baltimore as a Resilience Hub not only enables us to serve the community in a time of need, incorporating community solar and energy storage into the Resilience Hub will also expose our community to new technologies on the cutting edge of an emerging industry. Constructing these projects will enable new opportunities for local business, jobs, and wealth creation.”



Baltimore has been one of a few cities along the East Coast to prioritize the development and implementation of these resilience hubs. “Baltimore’s commitment to establishing Resiliency Hubs cannot come at a more critical time,” said Lisa McNeilly, Sustainability Director of the Baltimore Office of Sustainability. “At this very hour, our nation’s coastal communities are facing the onslaught of extreme weather or working to bounce back from its aftermath. That’s why the Baltimore Office of Sustainability is honored to support residents by making sure they are prepared for whatever natural or man-made hazards come our way. This exciting partnership with Empowerment Temple and Groundswell will provide much-needed emergency assistance to many of our most vulnerable community members.”

The City of Baltimore’s Resiliency Hub program is the first of its kind in America. Designed to provide priority support for neighborhoods that are most vulnerable to natural hazards, major community emergencies, and the impacts of climate change, Resiliency Hubs provide people with access to a safe daytime location, heating and cooling in the event of an emergency, and access to fresh water. As a Resiliency Hub, The Empowerment Temple will provide support to up to 2,500 people from the neighborhood during weather and other hazard events, coordinating with City resources and other partner organizations, as part of a city-wide effort to increase Baltimore’s resilience.

Through the combined community solar and battery storage project Groundswell is developing, The Empowerment Temple will also be able to keep the lights, heating, and cooling systems running even in

the case of a power outage – providing additional resilience to the neighborhood. The community solar project, which is currently completing final engineering and permitting, will deliver locally generated power from the sun to an estimated 100 families.

In service to TEEC's mission, the design and construction of the community solar and battery storage project will deliver job training, credentialing, workforce readiness, and local employment opportunities to the community in both the solar installation and energy storage fields. "We plan to develop a workforce not only for this emerging industry, but to address the workforce challenges in mature industries such as public utilities and aging infrastructure," according to Robinson. TEEC has already begun training a 24-person Green Team that will help to lead community engagement and on-site sustainability programs.

Investing in resilience and deploying more community solar and energy storage projects in Baltimore can help make sure Baltimore not only has more jobs, but that the people of Baltimore are represented among America's energy entrepreneurs.

[\[Story adapted from Groundswell Press Release\]](#)

# Resilient Worship

How can our worship and teaching encourage the building of a resilient community?

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*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

- Acts 4:32-35

From the inception of the Church, that small group of disciples in the Book of Acts, resilience has been central to worship. Resilience which is, fundamentally, structures and systems of support and commonality so that every person's needs are met. The disciples grappled with how to build resilience in the midst of the exploitative and anti-Christian Roman Empire. Now, our central challenge is to build resilience in the midst of climate crises that disproportionately impact the most vulnerable among us. This work of climate resilience, just like the work of resilience in the Book of Acts, begins in the Church. The structure of our communal life lies in the heart of Christian worship. The ways we structure our worship life resonates beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Incorporating elements of climate education and worship of God through creation can develop norms that support God's people and creation in the midst of the climate crisis.

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## **Use these questions and prompts in conversation about incorporating resilience into worship:**

### Think 1,000 years back

How does your denominational or theological tradition see the role of worship in relating to communal life?

What traditional elements of worship in your tradition are apt for addressing the climate crisis? Rituals of lament? Confession? Hope?

How has your church talked about climate issues in the past? Has it been preached on from the pulpit? Has it been discussed in small groups?

### Think 100 years ahead

How might the climate crisis call us to change our way of worshiping together?

Where in your church programming is there space for conversations around climate damage and resilience?

### Come into the watershed

How might you incorporate elements of your local ecology into worship? Could you host a worship service outside, somewhere in your watershed?

## **What can my church do?**

- [Find and connect with your religious community's representative to Creation Justice Ministries. If your religious community does not have one, encourage them to join.](#)
- Dedicate a Sunday to climate resilience. Use the musical and liturgical resources below.

- Offer a Spirituality in Nature session or incorporate pieces of spirituality in nature into your worship service

### **Resilience and Nature Resources:**

[Center for Spirituality in Nature](#)

[Inside Out: Practices for Going Deeper in Nature](#)

[Start SINGing: How to Form Your Own Spirituality in Nature Group](#)

### **Worship, music, and preaching resources:**

#### Biblical and Theological Reflections

[Theological Reflection: Finding Hope in Times of Crisis](#) (Kathy Smith, Baptist Creation Care Initiative)

[A Matter of Stewardship: Eco-Justice in Biblical Perspective](#) (Bible Study shared with permission by American Baptist Home Mission Societies)

[World Council of Churches Pastoral Letter on the Climate Emergency](#) (Rev. Olav Tveit, December 2019)

Book: [Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit](#) (Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade)

#### Eclectic, Ecumenical Hymn & Music Ideas

*Note: We link to YouTube so you can hear the hymns, but we have no control over YouTube's advertisements.*

[Beautiful Things](#) (Gungor)

[Canticle of the Turning](#) (Rory Cooney)

[City of God](#) (Dan Schutte)

[For the Beauty of the Earth](#) (Folliott Pierpoint; arranged by Mutual Kumquat)

[God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale](#) (Carl F. Schalk)

[Here I am, Lord](#) (Dan Schutte)

[I Need You to Survive](#) (Hezekiah Walker)

[Senzeni Na?](#) (Traditional South African confession & lament song)

[Take Good Care](#) (Bryan Moyer Suderman)

[The Earth Is Yours](#) (Gungor)

"The Earth Is The Lord's" by Carolyn Gillette [lyrics and music](#)

"O God, Creator of All Things" by Carolyn Gillette [lyrics and music](#)

"All Are Welcome" by Marty Haugen [lyrics](#)

"Gather Us In" by Marty Haugen [lyrics and music](#)

"Come to the Water" by John Foley [lyrics and music](#)

"Wade in the Water" by M.D. Ridge [lyrics and music](#)

"This is My Song" by Jean Sebelius [lyrics and music](#)

"Thirst For Life" by Ken Barker and Sam Dial [lyrics and guitar chords](#)

"Once a Woman Seeking Water" by Carolyn Gillette [lyrics](#)

### **Spotlight: St. Paul AME, Aurora, NC**

St. Paul's is nestled feet from the Pamlico River in Aurora, N.C., a 500-person town known for its museum featuring locally found fossils. While these preserved traces of prehistoric organisms bring tourists to the

town, their ancient, decayed, carboniferous cousins, converted to coal, oil, and gas, are forcing out Aurora's residents.

In 2011, Hurricane Irene slammed into North Carolina's Pamlico Sound, raising the tidal river to 10 feet above sea level, well beyond its banks, to swallow St. Paul's. It happened again in 2018, when Hurricane Florence dumped waist-deep water in Aurora and broke 28 flood records across the Carolinas. It is almost guaranteed the church will flood again soon. After Florence, the church was able to rebuild with insurance money, but that's not the case for many Aurora residents who are struggling with the decision of whether to stay and face the floods or leave. Many have chosen the latter, and St. Paul's, once a flourishing church with full pews, has diminished to six members.



In the very pews that were floating a year earlier, Glenoria Jennette, a second-generation member of St. Paul's, and James Parker, a 91-year-old lifelong resident of Aurora, share stories of how the sea's rising has affected their lives. Jennette lost her home, and nearly her husband, in Hurricane Irene and was forced to move inland to higher ground. Parker formerly worked in construction and has been part of efforts to raise houses and other structures onto stilts, an expensive adaptation technique that is inaccessible to low-income communities.

As we talked, Gerald Godette, who serves as a steward at the church, gently wove in the science behind climate change. Godette, a former marine biologist, went into ministry in 2015; faith, justice, and science, in that order, inform and guide Godette's work in the community. He's also a skilled facilitator, able to guide a conversation that weaves together Jennette and Parker's stories with the science of climate change and scripture.

What's remarkable about St. Paul's isn't the scale of their work; what's remarkable is that despite the sea shrinking their congregation and driving away their neighbors, the six-person community has not become discouraged and inwardly focused. Godette recently partnered with North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment to host public roundtables with coastal churches to talk about sea level rise adaptation. But as Godette told me before I visited, he also believes casual conversation is an important form of climate education. Often, if you "try to get your congregants to come to a formal setting to discuss climate change, they will not come," he explains; the community is rightly suspicious of political and economic agendas disguised as church. So Godette has become a master of creating informal climate conversations.

While the shrinking size of the congregation presents challenges for St. Paul's sustainability, the core of the church's courage is a willingness to engage in conversations about climate change. Recent data shows that nearly 70 percent of people in the U.S. agree the climate is changing, but about two-thirds never talk

about it. The same problem persists in our churches, where climate change often seems less important than other social issues or too political for the pews—at least until water floods those same pews.

There are physical needs that remain in Aurora, including a desperate need for funding to implement adaptation measures such as elevating the church and nearby houses on stilts. While federal programs exist to support adaptation, the scale of those programs is nowhere near the level of need. And the congregants at St. Paul's see the same story of their history played out again: While wealthier, whiter communities receive funding to relocate or adapt, Aurora is left behind.

Yet, courage persists. Starting with their conversations in the pews of St. Paul's, Jennette, Parker, and Godette continue to engage in local advocacy efforts to change those stories. And inside that riverside sanctuary, one informal conversation at a time, a community is strengthened.

*Text shared from Sojourners (<https://sojo.net/magazine/april-2020/how-three-coastal-churches-became-hubs-climate-resilience>)*

*Image from St. Paul AME Zion Church ([https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/about-us?lightbox=image\\_1eyb](https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/about-us?lightbox=image_1eyb))*

# Liturgical Resources

## Prayers for Resilience

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### Call to Worship

Like Job in the Whirlwind, or Jonah in the storm at sea, we come before you in awe of your power, God. We recognize that today's storms and whirlwinds are not your judgment on your people, but the distortion of natural systems through our own sin and hubris.

As the storms and whirlwinds of the climate crisis accelerate around us, may our sanctuary be a place of refuge and resilience, where all of God's creation might be protected and sustained, and from which we People of God might be sent forth to bring healing and justice.

### Responsive Reading<sup>13</sup>

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.

*My God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

The earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled. In my distress I called upon the Lord.

*From his temple he heard my focus and my cry to him reached his ears*

He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters

*He delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

This God's way is perfect;

*God is a shield for all who take refuge.*

### Prayers of the People

For all those around the world who have lost their homes, livelihoods, or communities to the climate crisis.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For our nonhuman siblings whose habitats are destroyed by the effects of greed and accumulation.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For decision-makers, that their choices might create a more beautiful, whole, resilient world.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For our own church, that we might be bearers of hope and resilience in our community, a place of refuge in the midst of crisis and disaster.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Psalm 18

### **Prayer of Confession**

The climate crisis calls out for urgent repentance and conversion. We are beckoned to rediscover a biblical vision and a new understanding of ourselves and God's creation. The only future foreshadowed by the present crises, both social and ecological, is massive suffering, both human and other than human. "Giver of Life--Sustain your Creation!" is our prayer; we should pray it without ceasing.<sup>14</sup>

[Adapted from WCC Prayer, Earth Gospel p 86]

Creator, we disfigure your world.

Lord, have mercy

*Lord, have mercy*

Redeemer, we reject your redemption and crucify you daily.

Christ, have mercy

*Christ, have mercy*

Giver of life, we too often choose death

Lord, have mercy

*Lord, have mercy<sup>15</sup>*

### **Prayer of Absolution**

Creator, forgive us for our sins against you and your Creation.

*In your name, may we turn from our sins and work towards a new creation, one in which all creatures are freed from the bondage of greed and accumulation and are able to flourish into their creatureliness.*

*May this church be a site of redemption and resilience, an extension of your love to all who are affected by the climate crisis.*

*In this land, this structure, this community, this worship, may we love you more fully by seeking justice for our neighbors.*

*Amen.*

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<sup>14</sup> Adapted from World Council of Churches prayer

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia Prayer