

Presbyterians for Earth Care Responds to Powerful Storms Made More Devastating by Climate Change

by Bruce Gillette

In response to the news of broad devastation by Tropical Storm Florence in North Carolina and South Carolina, Super Typhon Mangkhut in the Philippines and China along with the continuing recovery in Puerto Rico and other areas by past hurricanes, the annual meeting of Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC)'s Steering Committee took on a renewed sense of urgency.

Rick Ufford-Chase, Co-Director of Stony Point Center, met twice with the PEC Steering Committee and encouraged them to help Presbyterians become distinctive as a denomination known for its environmental work. The PEC Steering Committee dedicated their organization to work at encouraging "Every Church Green."

One way would be for every Presbyterian congregation to seek to use renewable energy sources like wind, solar and hydroelectric to avoid pollution that contributes to Climate Change. [State chapters of Interfaith Power & Light](#) can help congregations know local clean energy options. Other ideas can be found in the PCUSA's *Earth Care Congregation: A Guide to Greening Congregations* ([this very helpful guide is a free download from PCUSA web site](#)). Presbyterians for Earth Care has many [helpful resources and links to others on the PEC web site](#). PEC hopes to develop contacts in every Presbytery who can help their congregations in these efforts for "Every Church Green."

["Caring for God's creation"](#) as a calling for all church members was added to the *Book of Order* by the 2016 General Assembly and the Presbyteries. The importance of churches and individual members caring for creation and countering Climate Change is evident in continuing news stories of scientific findings.

During the PEC leaders' meeting, *Science* journal posted a new in-depth study that was reported in [The Washington Post](#) (September 27): "Harvey, Irma, Maria: These three monster hurricanes, all of which struck U.S. shores at Category 4 in 2017, probably attained such strength because of Atlantic Ocean waters that were abnormally warm, says a new [study published in the journal Science on Thursday](#). And, in future decades, as the ocean warms even more because of rising greenhouse gas concentrations from human activity, the study projects "even higher numbers of

major hurricanes.” Considering the toll of the 2017 hurricane season, [which unleashed 10 hurricanes in 10 weeks](#), and [three of the five costliest hurricanes on record](#) in Harvey, Irma and Maria, it is difficult to fathom the implications of similar circumstances repeating with even greater frequency.”

Facing news reports of these devastating storms, PEC members worshipped together using the “Service after Natural Disaster” from the new (2018) PCUSA *Book of Common Worship* and sang Carolyn Winfrey Gillette’s hymn, ["O God, We Prayed on Wind and Rain" from the PDA web site.](#)

Beyond engaging times of prayer and strategizing, several PEC leaders helped to clear a field at [Stony Point Center’s farm](#) that helps supply fresh seasonal vegetables, fruits and eggs for the guests at this national church conference center. The farm uses organic methods in ways that are sustainable and just while the kitchen produces delicious meals that have a national reputation among church and business groups that come to the center.



The Rev. Dr. William P. Brown will be the keynote speaker for the Presbyterians for Earth Care’s “Peace for the Earth” Conference at Stony Point, August 6-9, 2019. The Rev. Dr. William P. Brown is an outstanding teacher, biblical scholar and activist. [Dr. Brown is the William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary.](#) Among his many books is *Seven*

Pillars of Creation: Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder (Oxford University). He has been active with Georgia Power & Light and Presbyterians for Earth Care. PEC leaders hope to double the attendance for this biennial conference because of Dr. Brown and other excellent speakers meeting at the popular Stony Point Center.



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