News
EarthBeat



(Photo/Barbara Fraser)



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Editor's Note: *EarthBeat Weekly is your weekly newsletter about faith and climate change. Below is the Nov. 27 edition. To receive EarthBeat Weekly in your inbox, sign up here.*

A year ago, it would have been nearly impossible to imagine the disruption that the coronavirus pandemic would bring to our lives. Perhaps because of this year's upheaval, Advent, which begins Sunday, will be particularly welcome as a time to slow down, to wait in hope for the promise of peace that the Christ child brings.

Christmas may be different for many people this year, as well — fewer gatherings with family and friends, probably, and perhaps no office gift exchanges. But although the pandemic brings stress, it can also force us to appreciate the simple things.

This year, EarthBeat is partnering again with the Ignatian Solidarity Network to bring you "Simple Advent, Abundant Life," a series of daily Advent reflections. The brief spiritual reflections invite us to simplify our lives, but also remind us of the promise in the Gospel of John: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

"We came to the theme of abundant life from the John 10:10 quote because 2020 has been a very difficult year, so we wanted to invite people into a time of reflection, and being, and waiting, with an environmental focus," Brenna Davis, who wrote the reflections, told me.

Abundant life, she said, "happily coincides with living a bit more simply," an idea the Ignatian Solidarity Network is promoting with its Advent Simplicity Challenge.

Each of the four weeks will have a theme: simplicity of time, money, consumption and community.

Although news about the environment and climate change "is not always the most hopeful thing, the simplicity challenge gives people a practical way to live more gently on the earth," said Davis, who is the Ignatian network's director of education for justice and environmental initiatives. She is also a member of EarthBeat's advisory panel.

The reflections draw on the writings of various authors, especially "Simpler Living, Compassionate Life," a book of essays edited by Michael Schut.

Living more gently on the earth implies thinking about many facets of life — how we use the planet's resources, how we use technology, how we decide where we're going to travel and how we're going to get there, and how we manage our food from the farm to our plates.

"We're very pressed for time, and that often leads us to make decisions that are worse for the environment. Advent is a time to slow down and be more intentional," Davis said.

We invite you to slow down with us, beginning Sunday, with the first reflection of "Simple Advent, Abundant Life." You can sign up here to receive the daily spiritual reflections in your inbox.

Here's what's new on EarthBeat this week:

- At the end of the three-day virtual "Economy of Francesco" conference, Pope Francis encouraged those in attendance to respond to "the urgent need for a different economic narrative," and the young economists and entrepreneurs who participated outlined ideas for a new vision, reports NCR environment correspondent Brian Roewe.
- In a new story published Friday, I describe how a forest therapy walk can help us attune our senses to the natural world — even if we're indoors, connecting with Zoom in the middle of the pandemic.
- Hurricane Iota devastated a tiny Colombian island province off the coast of Nicaragua, destroying 80% of the buildings and damaging all of them, writes Cody Weddle for Catholic News Service.

- Catholic News Service also reports that an 84-year-old Jesuit priest imprisoned in India for helping poor farmers defend their land is sustained by his spirituality and the life stories of his fellow prisoners, who help him with daily tasks.

Here's what's new in other climate news this week:

- President-elect Joe Biden has tapped John Kerry, who helped negotiate the Paris climate agreement five years ago, as his special envoy for climate. Marianne Lavelle at InsideClimate News explains the tasks awaiting Kerry. The former Secretary of State and presidential candidate, who is Catholic, said in his introductory remarks that Biden "will trust in God — and he will also trust in science to guide our work on Earth to protect God's creation."

- Biden's far-reaching energy plan is likely to face opposition in Congress, but it could get a boost from a public that is increasingly receptive to proposals for addressing climate change, writes Scott L. Montgomery at The Daily Climate.

- In an effort to push back against more ambitious climate policies, fossil fuel companies are trying to position themselves as supporters of communities of color, even though studies show that those communities are disproportionately affected by pollution and climate change, reports Sammy Roth for the Los Angeles Times. EarthBeat has also reported on environmental justice issues in one such community in Los Angeles.

- Jeff Berardelli at CBS News writes that temperatures in the Arctic are rising three time as fast as in other parts of the world. And although it seems counterintuitive, Bob Berwyn at InsideClimate News explains how that could cause temperature extremes, including bouts of snow and cold weather, over northern continents.

Upcoming events:

"Transforming the Financial System for a Zero-Carbon Future," a webinar sponsored by The New York Times, will look at ways of redesigning financial markets so that responsible, climate-focused investing is the rule, rather than the exception. You can find more information about this and other events on our Upcoming Events page.

Closing beat:

In 2009, then-President Barack Obama established the day after Thanksgiving as Native American Heritage Day. Earlier this week, the Catholic Climate Covenant posted a blog about the Pawnee Seed Preservation Project, which is working to preserve an ancestral crop. And the forest therapy walks described in today's EarthBeat story always begin by calling to mind the original peoples who have lived in the place, or ecoregion, where the walk is held.

What are the names of the peoples who have inhabited the place where you live? What can you, your parish or your faith group do to honor them? Share your reflections with us by writing to us at earthbeat@ncronline.org.

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As we count our blessings at Thanksgiving, we are especially grateful for you, our readers. Thank you for reading EarthBeat!

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