

Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace



NewsNotes **February 2023**

Hello Jan,

Happy New Year to all!

I hope the start of the year has been good to you. I understand that both in the UK and the US the winter has been milder this year, although in the Northeast we are experiencing an arctic blast today and tomorrow. While we can enjoy the lower heating bills, those who depend on water stored after snowfalls may be thirsty later in the year.

Many people of Ukraine have no heat, power or water as the violence there continues unabated. We often pray for the end of violence. Pope Francis seems to mention Ukraine every day and he is now in Congo urging the various sides there to end their warring. Prayer is powerful, but what are we doing to end violence? If we have broken relationships we should look to seek reconciliation. Every act of healing is a step in the right direction of reducing violence on our planet. And we need to consider our abuse of nature and look to how we can heal that relationship. What kind of restitution do we need to make?

Some of what is below tells of the work of the UN at COP 15 on Biodiversity. The negotiators came to an agreement, some things the nations can do to stop biodiversity loss, but we can participate as well. Turning some of our grass lawns into native plantings, or small gardens is one way to restore biodiversity-and it saves on the gas needed to run a mower.

We are also hoping to strengthen our advocacy for the changes we need in our countries. This is another area we can participate in without too much difficulty. Many feel it is not worth contacting our national leaders, they feel no one is listening so, why bother? But the work is important and our call, as Mother Theresa reminded us, is not that we are called, not to be successful, we are called to be faithful.

If anyone has interest in joining one of our Laudato S'i Action Platform Teams, please reach out to me by email.

NewsNotes is created to raise issues of concern and to celebrate progress being made. We also provide suggestions for participation in the healing of our world. You can do it on your own, or join with a friend or two; but seriously consider doing something.

Peace and all good,

Frank

Frank McCann
Peace through Justice Facilitator
Congregation's NGO Representative to the UN



COP 15: Biodiversity Conference reaches agreement

from UN documents

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference ([COP15](#)) ended in Montreal, Canada, on 19 December 2022 with a [landmark agreement](#) to guide global action on nature through to 2030. Representatives from 188 governments have been gathered in Montreal for the past two weeks for the important summit.

Chaired by China and hosted by Canada, COP 15 resulted in the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) on the last day of negotiations. The GBF aims to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous rights. The plan includes concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30 per cent of the planet and 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030. It also contains proposals to increase finance to developing countries – a major sticking point during talks.

The stakes could not be higher: the planet is experiencing a dangerous decline in nature as a result of human activity. It is experiencing its [largest loss of life since the dinosaurs](#). One million plant and animal species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades.

Five causes for biodiversity decline were identified:

- 1) Changes in land and sea use
- 2) Climate change

- 3) Pollution
- 4) Direct exploitation of natural resources
- 5) Invasive species

Perhaps the most reported on success from the conference was an agreement to begin effective conservation and management of at least 30 per cent of the world's land, coastal areas and oceans. Currently, 17 percent of land and 8 per cent of marine areas are under protection and restoration of 30 per cent of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Questions were raised asking if this was enough area to restore or should it be doubled. Challenges were also raised because much of the land and water areas to be preserved were already inhabited by native peoples who have largely cared for those areas, meaning little new area will be restored.

[The final text of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework can be found here.](#)

Waterspirit Volunteer Orientation



are you ready to become a Waterspirit ambassador in your community?

Do you embody Waterspirit's eco-spiritual mission, or are you ready to learn more about how to enact that mission? If so, please join us for Waterspirit's Volunteer Orientation 2023!

This two-hour community gathering is intended for anyone who would like to learn more about eco-spirituality and about volunteering with Waterspirit. Discussion and training exercises will help you feel ready to hit the ground running in your community. We will give an overview of currently available opportunities (outreach, fundraising, advocacy, and office help), but there is always room to create new opportunities based on your skills and passions! We LOVE our volunteers! Become a Waterspirit ambassador by signing up for this training today!

Seal monitoring at Sandy Hook

Feb 15 -9:00 AM

Feb 21 -2:30 PM

March 8 -2:00 PM

Join Waterspirit Program Manager, Anne Price, as we monitor seals at Sandy Hook National Recreation Area. Did you know there are several species of seal which visit NJ? The seals feed and then haul out to rest and digest.

Join Waterspirit at Sandy Hook to see the seals in person. We will watch the seals and record data to report. While we are there, we will discuss all of the wildlife around us. Meeting at Spermaceti Cove Parking Area.

[Register for February 15](#)

[Register for February 21](#)

[Register for March 8](#)



A Statement by the National Black Sisters Conference on the murder of Tyre Nichols

The New Year is barely a month old. We have just celebrated the national holiday honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the warrior of peace, and the world sadly commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In a few days, we will celebrate Black History Month as we honor the achievements and contributions of African Americans in the struggle for freedom.

Yet here we are again grieving the death of another young Black man, Tyre Nichols, whose life was taken at the hands of five Black police officers on a night in a quiet Memphis neighborhood.

Tyre Nichols' life at the age of 29 was taken before he had a chance to fulfill his purpose. This young man was not a person to be feared or perceived to be a threat. He was a son, father, and contributor to society; respected and loved by all who knew him. His only crime was being Black in the wrong place at the

wrong time.

Violence against African Americans has been a fact of life in this country since the first slave patrols were created in the 1700s to apprehend runaway slaves. Historically, the system was designed to institutionalize terror against Black people.

The five Black police officers who brutally took Tyre's life as he cried out for his mother; were indoctrinated into a corrupt system and freely chose to perpetrate violence against other Black people in the name of institutionalized racism.

Unfortunately, police violence is not new. The video of the incident is no different from other police footage, and the only difference is that the majority of the officers are Black!

In speaking to this fact, Mr. Nichols' mother, RowVaugh Wells, stated: "...And what they are doing to black communities is wrong. We're not worried about the race of the police officers, and we're worried about the conduct of the police officers. Policing in this country is focused on control, subordination and violence...society views black people as inherently dangerous and criminal..."

The National Black Sisters Conference is worried too! When will we wake up as a nation?

How many lives will it take? How often must we bear witness to the senseless killing of African Americans by the police? Where is the collective voice of our religious communities, African American organizations, and Church? The prophet Micah's words speak to what the righteous are called to do: "The just God demands justice!" God demands a change of heart.

As we move into Black History Month, how will we answer a mother's prophetic words on the sad occasion of her son's death? What will we remember? How will this modern-day Black genocide be eradicated? Where do we go from here?

With righteous indignation, we all must act! Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. writes in his book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* "Freedom is not won by passive acceptance of suffering. A struggle wins freedom against suffering." Let this be our rallying cry for justice!

As the National Black Sisters' Conference, we are demanding JUSTICE FOR TYRE! and calling for:

- Immediate passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 by Congress
- More progressive oversight and accountability of police departments by the Justice Department
- Local and State reform of policing, and
- The end to police brutality that continues to plague Black and poor communities

Finally, we call on our Church to speak out in the name of the Gospel. This killing is a pro-life issue that is just as important as protecting the life of the unborn.

Tyre's spirit cries out for justice, and we will continue to stand in the gap, crying out in the name of justice for our people.

United in the struggle for justice,
The National Black Sisters' Conference
January 30, 2023

The Doomsday Clock moves to 90 seconds before midnight



This year, the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moves the hands of the Doomsday Clock forward, largely (though not exclusively) because of the mounting dangers of the war in Ukraine. The Clock now stands at 90 seconds to midnight—the closest to global catastrophe it has ever been.

The war in Ukraine may enter a second horrifying year, with both sides convinced they can win. Ukraine's sovereignty and broader European security arrangements that have largely held since the end of World War II are at stake. Also, Russia's war on Ukraine has raised profound questions about how states interact, eroding norms of international conduct that underpin successful responses to a variety of global risks.

And worst of all, Russia's thinly veiled threats to use nuclear weapons remind the world that escalation of the conflict—by accident, intention, or miscalculation—is a terrible risk. The possibility that the conflict could spin out of anyone's control remains high.

Russia has also brought its war to the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear reactor sites, violating international protocols and risking widespread release of radioactive materials. Efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency to secure these plants so far have been rebuffed.

As Russia's war on Ukraine continues, the last remaining nuclear weapons

treaty between Russia and the United States, New START, stands has been postponed. Unless the two parties resume negotiations and find a basis for further reductions, the treaty will expire in February 2026. This would eliminate mutual inspections, deepen mistrust, spur a nuclear arms race, and heighten the possibility of a nuclear exchange.

In addition to the nuclear risk, these other factors led to the moving the hands on the Doomsday Clock:

- **Climate Change**

The geopolitical fissure opened by the invasion of Ukraine has weakened the global will to cooperate on climate change and undermined confidence in broad-based multilateral collaboration. [Read more...](#)

- **Biological Threats**

The international community must improve its ability to prevent disease outbreaks, detect them quickly when they occur, and respond effectively to limit their scope. [Read more...](#)

- **Disruptive Technologies**

From disinformation to drones, developments regarding potential threats from disruptive technologies told a mixed story last year. [Read more...](#)

The Elders warn urgent action on climate, pandemics, nuclear weapons needed to turn back hands of the Doomsday Clock



As Elders, we believe the world is facing a set of threats that put all humanity at risk. Our [Strategy 2023-2027](#) outlines how we will address them.

For the next five years, our focus will be on the climate crisis, nuclear weapons, pandemics, and the ongoing scourge of conflict. The impact of these threats is already being seen on lives and livelihoods: a rapid rise in extreme weather events, a pandemic that killed millions and cost trillions, a war in

which the use of nuclear weapons has been openly raised. Some of these threats jeopardise the very existence of human life on our planet, yet nations lack the ability or will to manage these risks.

We are approaching a precipice.

The urgency of the interconnected existential threats we face requires a crisis mindset from our leaders – one that puts our shared humanity centre-stage, leaves no one behind, and recognises the rights of future generations.

We believe that when nations work together, these threats can all be addressed for the good of the whole world. But to do so, our political leaders must show purpose, moral courage and an urgency of action.

This is why, over the next five years, we will work on three programmes that address existential threats to humanity requiring a collective response - the [climate crisis](#), [pandemics](#), and [nuclear weapons](#) - and also on [conflict](#) (a threat in itself, and a risk factor for other threats).

We will use our independence, collective experience and moral authority to hold world leaders to account for managing these threats better.

Drawing on our [values](#) and our [mandate from Nelson Mandela](#), we will incorporate four [cross-cutting commitments](#) across our new programmes: multilateralism, human rights, gender equality and women in leadership, and intergenerational dialogue.

As Elders, we may not have all the answers. But we strive for a world where common purpose trumps isolationism, impunity no longer goes unchallenged, and people of all ages see the future not with despair but with hope.

Who are the Elders?

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and Chair of The Elders
Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of The Elders
Graça Machel, founder of the Graça Machel Trust, co-founder and Deputy Chair of The Elders
Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the WHO
Elbegdorj Tsakhia, former President and Prime Minister of Mongolia
Zeid Raad Al Hussein, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Hina Jilani, advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and co-chair of the Taskforce on Justice
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate
Ricardo Lagos, former President of Chile
Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia and Nobel Peace Laureate
Ernesto Zedillo, former President of Mexico

I was 'a stranger and you gave me no welcome'



By Tony Magliano

In the Gospel account of the “Judgement of the Nations,” Jesus warns us that not attending to the basic needs of our suffering brothers and sisters for food, drink, clothing, companionship, and welcome alienates us from him – possibly eternally so!

Among his clear warnings here is “I was ... a stranger and you gave me no welcome” (see: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/25>).

Jesus’ warning is so strong, so jolting because Jesus most especially identifies with the vulnerable and poor. And thus, so should we. Not only because our eternal soul is on the line, but also because if we love like Jesus, then our compassionate hearts will naturally reach out to our suffering brothers and sisters.

And among the most desperate are those who have no place to call home – especially our brothers and sisters who have no viable option other than to flee their native country due to extreme poverty, gang violence, armed conflicts and/or increasingly severe weather events. But sadly, many wealthy nations continue to largely turn a blind eye to the desperate plight of migrants, refugees and asylees.

[Pope Francis has condemned](#) Europe’s treatment of migrants as “disgusting, sinful and criminal.”

And another overwhelmingly heartless example of this, is the recent announcement that U.S. President Biden’s administration will continue former President Trump’s cold-hearted policy known as Title 42, which overrides national and international law guaranteeing migrants the right to apply for asylum, and instead will largely continue to bar migrants from seeking asylum in the U.S.

U.S. Title 42, enacted in 1944 to prohibit the entry of migrants when serious danger exists in the spread of communicable diseases, has been unfairly applied during Covid-19. According to the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), “There was – and remains – no public health evidence that singling out asylum seekers or other migrants for exclusion is effective in stemming the spread of Covid-19.”

The recent Biden administration announcement to continue Title 42 is specifically aimed at rapidly expelling migrants/asylum seekers from Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua. He said, “Do not just show up at the border.”

As a concession of sorts, the Biden administration will allow up to 30,000 people from those three nations, including Venezuela, to apply for entry into the U.S. each month, for a stay of only two years.

The Sisters of Mercy, in an action alert, state that this process favors those with means, as applicants must have a passport, a plane ticket, and a U.S. financial sponsor; placing heavy burdens on the most vulnerable asylum

seekers. Please send the Biden administration a strong message of objection found at this link <https://bit.ly/3Xv1hjM>.

Because the U.S. and other rich nations are largely closing legal doors to immigration, desperate migrants will continue to be forced to choose dangerous routes of entry in the hope of filling vacant low-paying jobs to help support their very poor families.

Unlike poor U.S. citizens, undocumented workers and their families cannot receive food stamps, Medicaid, or housing assistance. They are at the lowest rung of American life.

St. Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth") wrote, "Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there."

Readers in the U.S., please email and call (Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121) your two U.S. senators and House representative urging them to pass long overdue fair, compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform legislation this year.

Lord Jesus, heal our indifference, and inspire us to welcome these strangers as valuable members of your one human family, so that on the Day of Judgment we may gladly hear you say, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist and speaker. He is not a member of the AUSCP. His point of view is his own and not necessarily that of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests.

A Familiar Stranger

I saw a stranger today.
I put food for him
in the eating-place
And drink
in the drinking-place
And music
in the listening-place.

In the Holy name
of the Trinity
He blessed myself
and my family.
And the lark said in her warble
Often, often, often
Goes Christ
in the stranger's guise.

O, oft and oft and oft,
Goes Christ
in the stranger's guise.



The Charitable Giving Team is working

This week, the Charitable giving team met with our advisors from The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI) to discuss suggested recipient of grants from our Congregation. In the two-hour meeting we reviewed 36 suggested organizations and added two more as we met. Eight of the organizations were ones we donated to as part of the pilot program set up after the Chapter in 2014. Some of the others were set aside to hold for another time, a few will be asked for more information to see if they are really appropriate, and the rest will be asked if they want to submit Requests for Proposal forms (RFPs). These forms indicate the amount of the grant being sought, what work will be undertaken and how the work will be evaluated to determine effectiveness.

The criteria for determining appropriate projects or organizations were drafted by TPI after consulting with the team members and the criteria are drawn from our recent chapter statement.

The team hopes to begin review Requests for Proposals (RFPs) during March so grants can begin shortly thereafter.

This Charitable Giving team was set up as part of our response to the Laudato Si action Platform.

Shareholder Advocacy

This past month or two we have been in negotiations with three corporations to which we wrote proposals from our position as investors. In each case we are working with other congregations and our advisors at Investor Advocates for Social Justice.

We asked Citibank for a report on Citi's policies, practices and performance indicators respecting internationally recognized human rights standards for Indigenous People's rights in existing and proposed general and project financing. We are aware of objection from Native American people about oil pipelines funded by Citi, and from Amazon tribes who do not want oil exploration in their region.

We have been in dialogue about which projects Citi can actually control. Yes, they have power if it is their own project whereas they have less influence when providing financing to projects run by other corporations. Negotiations are still ongoing.

Over a year ago we filed a Proposal with Tyson asking them to conduct a Racial Equity Audit (REA) of their entire operation from supplies through management to include impacts on local communities. They agreed and we withdrew our proposal. We have had several meetings with them this year and were disappointed to learn they were leaning toward hiring a firm to do the REA that had a strong anti-union reputation. We recently learned that a budget for the project had just been approved, when the report was to have been done by now in our original agreement. We are hoping to have representatives at the Tyson Annual General Meeting to get more definitive answers to their intentions and/or to make a public statement.

Southern is a large energy company that provides electricity to much of the Southeast. We filed a Proposal asking for an environmental audit of their operations. There are complaints from local communities in several states about pollution from coal ash pits left from their coal burning operations (Alabama) and of radiation from their nuclear plants (Georgia). They also claim to be on target to meet the Paris accords but still plan to have 40% of their power provided by fracked gas. They are asking us to withdraw our proposal.

We are investigating the possibility of joining with another group that has proposed an REA that was accepted by Southern. We would expect that a complete REA would have enough of an environmental review that would allow us to withdraw our proposal and still achieve our objective. No final decision has been made.





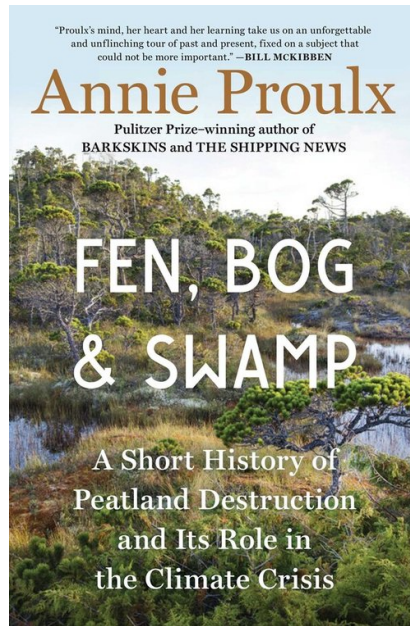
Climate Pastoral Care Course



Climate Pastoral Care

Faith communities are equipped with their own traditions and tools that can help us face the climate emergency. Learn more about the physical, emotional, mental health, and spiritual impacts of the climate crisis and how to address them through the practice of pastoral care in this new thirteen-module course. You do this course online and at your own pace. To learn more about this course visit our website <https://www.waterspirit.org/climate-pastoral-care>

This course was created by Waterspirit (US) and Jessica Morthorpe of Five Leaf Eco-Awards (AUS).



Feb 27 6 pm

The book we are currently reading is
Fen, Bog & Swamp: A Short History of Peatland Destruction and Its Role in the
Climate Crisis Us by Pulitzer Prize winner Annie Proulx (2022).

Join us on Zoom as we discuss this riveting deep dive into the history of
wetlands and what their systematic destruction means for the planet.



Meditation for Earth



Please join Waterspirit every Tuesday at 12:15 PM for a "Meditation for Earth." We read a short blessing, followed by an excerpt from Hal Borland's '12 moons of the Year'. Then we lead a simple meditation followed with silence, for a flourishing Earth. The meditation and silence is approximately 30 minutes.

There are two ways to meditate with us: In-person in the Sanctuary at the First Presbyterian Church of Rumson. 4 East River Road, Rumson, NJ. Or Online on our YouTube channel. No matter where you are in the world, you can join us as we meditate for our Earth!

[Find the Meditation on the Waterspirit YouTube Channel.](#)



Working on Advocacy with NETWORK lobby

In hope of improving our Congregation's advocacy impacts (LSAP Goal 7) we have been talking with NETWORK, the Catholic Sisters social justice lobby in Washington. I have been meeting with them monthly with a small group of activists from New Jersey on the first Wednesday of each month. To make it more timely for the publication of NewsNotes, they have agreed to shift the meeting to the last Wednesday of the month and to meet from 7-8 PM Eastern time. We will get an update each month on what is happening of concern to us in the Capitol. Suggestions will be made regarding calls or letters to

legislators on important issues which I will publish in the next NewsNotes. If anyone from NJ wants to join those zoom meetings, let me know and I will pass on the zoom call invitation.

If there are any from the West who would be interested in a similar group, perhaps working with IPJC and NETWORK we can arrange a similar monthly zoom call.

NETWORK scorecard on federal legislators

Network has released its biannual scorecard on votes by legislators in the House and the Senate. NETWORK is proposing those interested take a copy to their senators and/or representatives to congratulate them on their scores. The Senators from New Jersey and Washington both scored 100% on the scorecard. With the representatives you would have to look up their record. The legislators always appreciate a pat on the back when in our estimation they are doing good work. It is an outstanding opportunity to meet them (or office staff) to begin to develop an effective relationship around issues of common concern.

You can obtain a copy of the scorecard from the NETWORK website.

Waterspirit invites you to Green Amendment Advocacy Day



The advocacy day is in Trenton at the NJ Statehouse: Feb 27 9:30-10:30 am, please join us as we put our faith into works by advocating at the New Jersey statehouse for durable legal grounding: a New Jersey Green Amendment. For details: <https://www.waterspirit.org/events-calendar/2023/1/31/green-amendment-advocacy-day-in-trenton-save-the-date>

February International Days

01 Feb World Interfaith Harmony Week, 1-7 February (A/RES/65/5)

02 Feb World Wetlands Day (A/RES/75/317)

04 Feb International Day of Human Fraternity (A/RES/75/200)

06 Feb International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (A/RES/67/146)

10 Feb World Pulses Day (A/RES/73/251)

11 Feb International Day of Women and Girls in Science (A/RES/70/212)

12 Feb International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism (A/RES/77/243)

13 Feb World Radio Day (A/RES/67/124)

14 Feb Valentines Day in the US

20 Feb World Day of Social Justice (A/RES/62/10)

21 Feb International Mother Language Day (A/RES/56/262)

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