Chesapeake Quarterly

MARYLAND SEA GRANT COLLEGE • VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3

Churches & the Chesapeake

Can Religion Save the Bay?

contents

Volume 15, Number 3

CHESAPEAKE QUARTERLY *October 2016*

Chesapeake Quarterly explores scientific, environmental, and cultural issues relevant to the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. The magazine is produced and funded by the Maryland Sea Grant College. The college receives support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the state of Maryland.

Maryland Sea Grant College staff: Director, Fredrika Moser; Director of Communications, Jeffrey Brainard; Magazine Editor, Michael W. Fincham, Science Writer, Daniel Pendick; Production Editor/Art Director, Sandy Rodgers.

Send items for the magazine to:

Maryland Sea Grant College
4321 Hartwick Road, Suite 300
University System of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20740
301.405.7500, fax 301.314.5780
e-mail: mdsg@mdsg.umd.edu
www.mdsg.umd.edu
www.chesapeakequarterly.net

Cover photo: *This image shows two pillars of Eastern Shore life: a deadrise workboat and a Methodist church. The workboat is the* Velma Dawn*, docked on Parson's Creek just south of the Little Choptank River. The church has been known as Madison United Methodist and Joppa Methodist.* PHOTOGRAPH, MICHAEL W. FINCHAM

In Search of an Ethic

What are the keys to restoring the Chesapeake Bay?

Here are some familiar answers: more research, better technologies for treating sewage runoff and air pollution, new controls on stormwater runoff from cities and suburbs, reductions in nutrient runoff from farms, perhaps a cap and trade approach, certainly smarter regulation of fishing. The list goes on and nearly every step is needed for restoring the country's largest estuary.

A number of activists have another answer to add to the list. They're calling for an environmental ethic — and they suggest it should be at the top of the list. Science findings may explain *how* we can restore the Bay. But they don't explain *why* we should. That's the role of an ethic.

Why is the why so important? Because the how of restoring the Chesapeake, according to the science of recent decades, requires changing dozens of behaviors by millions of people. Restoring the Bay and preserving the planet take more than government legislation and regulation and funding. It takes people changing the way they farm their land, drive their cars, power their homes, cultivate their lawns, landscape their yards — that list could also be longer.

An environmental ethic, in theory, provides an ethical framework for viewing nature and understanding our responsibilities for preserving rather than just exploiting its resources. Without a shared ethic, it's easier to keep overharvesting the Bay's fish stocks and flooding its creeks and rivers and mainstem with stormwater runoff and farmland runoff and sewage from wastewater treatment plants.

The need for an ethic focused on the Chesapeake Bay was well noted years ago. In 1991, the first major study of environmental activism in Maryland surveyed 85 environmental organizations and interviewed more then 250 activists and environmental professionals. The principal author was the late Ellen Fraites, an environmental advisor to former Governor Harry Hughes during the creation of the Chesapeake Bay restoration program. Fraites was well aware activists don't always agree with each other, but in her survey, published by Maryland Sea Grant, she found clear consensus on this issue: "The major challenge facing Maryland's environmental movement is instilling a deeper environmental ethic within the citizenry."

Only a few environmentalists in the Fraites study called for bringing religion into their movement. One even asked, "How many environmentalists do you meet that go to church on Sunday?" For many activists, environmentalism seemed to be a secular religion in itself — one that didn't need deities or moral duties.

Now it turns out that a lot of environmentalists probably do go to church. According to the Pew Research Center, 77 percent of Americans identify with a religion, and half of them attend a service every month. And in recent decades a religious environmental movement — originally spurred by the science community — has begun emerging in this country and advocating for a faith-based ethic focused on stewardship of the earth and eco-justice for the poor.

That movement arrived in this region recently, and in the words of one leader it has these goals: to recruit faith-based communities and get them "to work together to add the moral voice to the Chesapeake Bay restoration movement."

The questions for this edition of our magazine: Where did this faith-based activism came from? And what role could it play in the 33-year-old effort to restore Chesapeake Bay?

— *Michael W. Fincham*

Crisis of Faith

The Case for Religious Environmentalism

By Michael W. Fincham

On Christmas Day 1966, a snowstorm descended on Washington, D.C., and so did thousands of scientists. Most of them straggled into town late, delayed by snow-clogged roads, closed airports, and canceled train schedules along much of the East Coast. They were trying to work their way here by bus and car, plane and train, so they could attend the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the largest gathering of working scientists in the world. More than 7,000 in all would finally arrive, filling the city's three largest hotels.

On the day after that Christmas storm, a historian named Lynn White Jr. entered the huge ballroom in the Sheraton-Park Hotel and stepped up to the podium to give the conference's first end-of-the-day speech. It was a general-interest event scheduled for the evening to draw a large crowd. And it was supposed to be a big-picture lecture on how humans were changing the planet. The AAAS planning committee wanted the country's science community to begin thinking about causes and solutions for the world's growing environmental crisis.

White would not disappoint. His speech not only had a big-picture title, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," it also had impact. The program for the week-long AAAS meeting would feature more than 400 separate sessions with more than 1500 speakers. The most widely remembered talk, however, would be the one given by White, a 60-year-old scholar with a full head of wavy gray hair, a penchant for suits with wide lapels, and a reputation as an authority on the rise of science and technology during the Middle Ages.

What the science community got from a medieval scholar was some unexpected thinking about a contemporary problem. The root causes for the environmental crisis, according to White, were not in our industries, not in the way they were exhausting natural resources, felling our great forests, fouling the air, or polluting the water in our rivers and bays and oceans. The causes of the crisis, said White, were in our heads, in the unconscious ideas that we carried through our lives. And for most people in Western societies, those ideas came from the Judeo-Christian religious tradition.

It was a prickly Christmas message White was delivering to leaders of the science community — and through them to leaders of religious communities around the country. It was a message White was willing to state with a boldness rarely seen in aca-

Dark clouds of factory smoke *obscure Clark Avenue Bridge in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1973 — an example of the environmental crisis scientists were addressing at the time.* PHOTOGRAPH, FRANK J. ALEKSANDROWICZ, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION COLLECTION

Two scientists played unusual roles *in the rise of a religious environmental movement in this country: Lynn White Jr. (above) and Carl Sagan (opposite page). White, a medieval historian, ignited a long-running debate when he said the Judeo-Christian tradition helped inspire the rise of Western science and create the current environmental crisis. Sagan, a famous astronomer, worked with other scientists in a campaign to persuade religious leaders to help solve the crisis.* PHOTOGRAPHS, LYNN WHITE JR., IMOGENE CUNNINGHAM, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, F.W. OLIN LIBRARY, MILLS COLLEGE; CARL SAGAN, NASA/COSMOS STUDIOS

demic discourse. According to his analysis of the environmental crisis, the Judeo-Christian tradition "bears a huge burden of guilt."

The editors at the *Washington Post* knew a good story when they saw it. The next day they made White's speech the focus of their first story about the 1966 meeting. And they suspected another story was afoot, a story about changing relations between the science and religious communities, two groups that did not have a history of collaborating well. The paper noted that discussions about religion were a first at an AAAS convention — because religious inquiry was "generally believed to be irrelevant, if not inimical to scientific pursuits."

A change was brewing. Two months later White's speech about religion was published in *Science* magazine, one of the planet's most influential science journals, and that event elevated the importance of his controversial claims. His speech and his paper would unleash a post-Christmas storm, creating a debate that endures today about the connections between religion and science and the growing environmental crisis.

White's paper would eventually spawn dozens of books and hundreds of articles from historians and social scientists and religious scholars — most of them hoping to critique or even debunk White's argument. A funny thing happened on the way to the debunking. Many of the major Western religions began — over several decades — to re-examine their traditions, preparing the way for the rise of a religious environmental movement in many areas of the country, including the Chesapeake Bay region.

The man all these critics were trying to debunk was — ironically enough — the son of a Presbyterian minister. For his undergraduate work Lynn White Jr. attended Stanford University, but he earned his first graduate degree at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. And for his second graduate degree, a Ph.D. at Harvard, he spent months submerged in the archives of monasteries that flourished in Sicily during the Middle Ages.

Out of that early research White came to see monasticism as one of the wellsprings of Western technology. European monks believed that daily work was a form of worship and that creating new mechanical devices to speed their work was morally virtuous. As his career progressed, White became convinced that certain deep-seated values within Christianity not only spurred the growth of Western science and technology but also encouraged an aggressive stance toward nature that would have damaging consequences.

By the time he walked to the podium at the 1966 meeting of the AAAS, White was widely acknowledged as a pioneering historian. He'd written the classic work, *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, he'd already been president of the Society for the History of Technology, and he would soon be president of the History of Science Society. With this speech to the science community, he would win fame (and some infamy) that reached beyond the academic world — thanks to an argument that became known as "The Lynn White Thesis."

In stating his thesis, White cited the Creation story found in Genesis 1, the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, the most widely read book in Western civilization. Humans, according to Genesis 1, were created in the image of God: they were separate from nature. And they were given dominion over nature, over the plants and the animals and the earth. According to White those two ideas — separation and dominion — would create a heady, but hurtful mixture in Judeo-Christian religions.

Those ideas, he said, established a dualism between humans and nature that would lay the "psychic foundations" for the rise of Western science and technology. It was a dualism that energized scientists to investigate and probe and manipulate nature. Like the Bible, nature was a book to be read, another way to understand God's work, a way "to think God's thoughts after him." The attitude was common to Copernicus and Galileo and Newton — whose discoveries would undercut the religious worldviews of their eras.

As Judeo-Christian religions spread widely, they supplanted pagan religions that featured animistic beliefs. Pagan cultures may have altered their environment, but they did so believing there were spir-

its and souls alive in everything in nature — in animals, plants, rivers, mountains, the moon, and the sun. It was a vastly different way of looking at the world — and it was disappearing. "The victory of Christianity over paganism," said White, "was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture."

While most forms of religious fervor disappeared from science during recent centuries, according to White, the underlying presuppositions — separation and dominance — still persisted in "a post-Christian world." They were still soaking our science and technology with what he called "orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature."

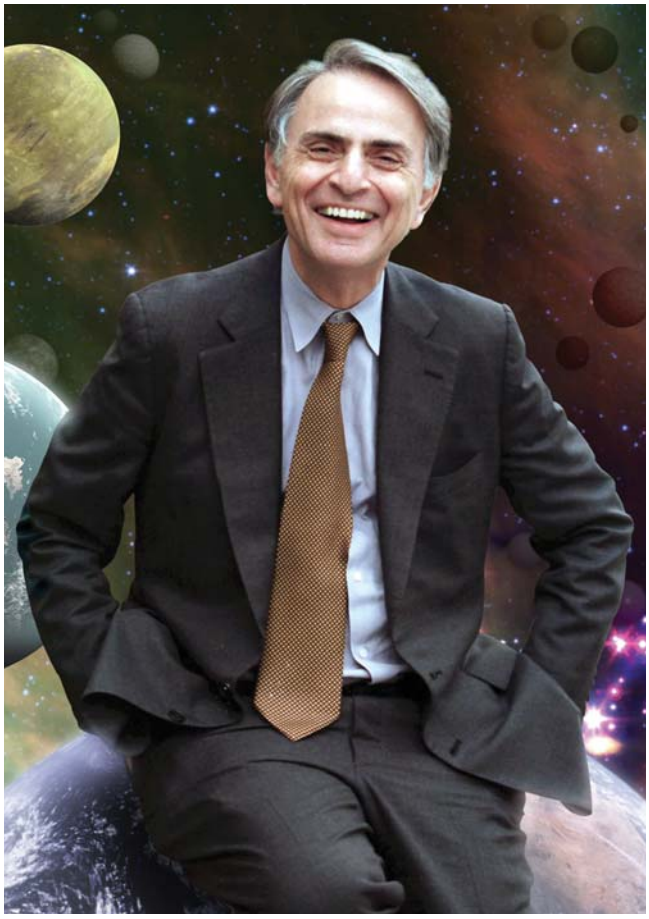
The impact of that arrogance? Science and technology put new power in the hands of humans to manipulate nature and exploit the planet's resources. That power helped human societies feed, clothe, and shelter the planet's growing populations of humans. But all that science-powered exploitation often came with collateral damage: extinction of species, large-scale deforestation, disruptive forms of energy extraction, and the funneling of waste products and pollution into the air and rivers and estuaries and oceans.

The underlying assumptions about nature had changed for Judeo-Christian believers. The spirits that once animated trees, animals, and the earth had fled the scene. The sense of the sacred in nature had faded like an early morning mist.

By the 20th century, a sense of the sacred was replaced by a sense of unease about all this collateral damage wrought by human technologies. By the 1960s, unease was morphing into worries about an environmental crisis, and new environmental organizations formed in America, including groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace. Lobbying by groups like this helped inspire a Clean Air Act, a Clean Water Act, an Endangered Species Act, and an Environmental Protection Agency.

These landmark legislations, however, came from an environmental movement that operated under secular, science-based leadership, and their victories were won with little input or help from the country's faith communities. By 1990, new worries about global warming led to a call for religious communities to help tackle the growing environmental crisis facing the planet.

One of those calls came from the science community. The astronomer Carl Sagan began recruiting dozens of well-known scientists, persuading them to sign a document he called "An Open Letter to the Religious Community." His message: it was time to resurrect a sense of the sacred in nature.



"The environmental crisis requires radical changes," Sagan wrote, "not only in public policy, but also in individual behavior." And that is where Sagan thought religion might supply something science could not. "Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred." And religion, he said, could do better with that than science could.

It was a message likely to be heard. By 1990 Sagan was probably the most famous scientist in the country, the most widely quoted, and the most listened to. His science reputation was based on his work on topics like exobiology, the atmospheric conditions of nearby planets, and the "nuclear winter" that all-out warfare would create. His public fame came from writing popular books, from appearing regularly on the *Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, and from writing and starring in *Cosmos*, the most widely viewed series in the history of public television.

Sagan had achieved the status of a science oracle with the American public, in part because of his ability to explain science in lyrical, poetic language, in part because he was willing — more willing than most well-known scientists — to risk his fame by taking public stands on controversial issues.

Any scientists who joined his crusade for religious environmentalism could expect their plea would be heard and their names would be known. The scientists who agreed to go public with Sagan included giants in a number of esoteric fields: Hans Bethe, the nuclear physicist, joined up; and so did Freeman Dyson, the theoretical physicist; Lynn Margulis, the evolutionary theorist; E.O. Wilson, the biologist who helped found the science of sociobiology; and Roger Revelle, the oceanographer who raised the first alarms about global warming.

On this issue Sagan was willing to do more than write a letter and recruit scientists. In January 1990, he flew to Moscow with Senator Al Gore, a politi-

cian who was a committed environmentalist, and they presented Sagan's letter from the science community to a global forum of religious leaders.

What did Sagan and his scientists want from the religious community? Nothing less than "a commitment in **word** and **deed** [Sagan's boldface] to preserving the environment of the Earth." His open letter read like a confession and an accusation: a confession that scientists were not solving the environmental crisis and an accusation that religious leaders weren't doing a very good job either.

Interfaith Power and Light began in 1998 *as a local San Francisco campaign to encourage churches to address global warming by seeking non-carbon energy sources. It now has programs in 40 states and in Washington, D.C., where Rev. Jered Weber-Johnson blesses rooftop solar panels at St. Alban's Episcopal Church located next to the National Cathedral.* PHOTOGRAPH, CARLO LA PORTA

The religious response to the science plea — at least at the national level — was immediate. A number of faith leaders said Sagan's call for religious action was "a unique moment in the relationship of science and religion."

In June 1991, several hundred religious leaders from five continents gathered in New York, meeting at the American Museum of Natural History and at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Over two days they debated and decided on a pledge they called "A Joint Appeal in Science and Religion." Created as a companion piece to Sagan's letter, the Joint Appeal committed the signers to specific steps towards educating their congregations about the environmental crisis and advocating for public policies to address it.

In 1992, a number of those leaders took the next step. Clergy and activists from the Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical faiths gathered in Washington, D.C., for a meeting organized by Paul Gorman, a vice president at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Under Gorman's approach, the leaders of each faith met first among themselves to discuss the perspectives on environmentalism found in their tradition. Next came interfaith discussions that included Sagan and Gore, followed by an eventual agreement to form and fund a National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

In 1993, all that planning launched three new religious environmental groups: the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE).

What was going on? It was an abrupt awakening of the American religious establishment, said Gorman, speaking in a recent interview with the sociologist Peter Ellingson. It was a paradigm shift, says Cassandra Carmichael, the current leader of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. "The NRPE," she says, "formed in response to scientists like Carl Sagan saying, we need you, we can't do this without you."

Why was an awakening needed? Many people sitting in the pews, it turned out, hadn't been hearing much guidance in their churches and synagogues and mosques. "You didn't hear anything about the environment. That wasn't even a consideration in how we lived," says Episcopal Bishop Eugene Sutton, who grew up in the nation's capital during the 1950s and 1960s.

What kind of advice was he hearing back in those pre-Earth Day decades? "Get the big gas guzzler! This was America! We were expanding," says Sutton. "You get things and then you throw them away."

It takes time, however, for an awakening among bishops and cardinals to trickle down to the pews. A national religious organization — much like an army — can send out top-down directives, it can issue marching orders, but putting troops out in the field is always slow work.

Before the marching comes basic training and before basic training comes training manuals — in this case, religious advisories that had to be theologically grounded and scientifically informed. "We had to get the theology right," said Gorman

If religions were going to offer a faith-based, earth-friendly ethic, faith scholars were going to have go find it first. To get the theology right, the Harvard Divinity School held ten major faith conferences between 1996 and 1998. Organized by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, the meetings attracted more than 700 religious scholars, environmental activists, and grassroots leaders.

One result of all this rethinking was a shift in Biblical focus that downplayed the first chapter of Genesis (where Adam is given dominion) and refocused on the second chapter (where Adam is given duties). That's where Biblical passages about stewardship are found. "God took the human he had formed and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to protect it," says Nina Beth Cardin. A community rabbi and environmental

activist from Baltimore, Cardin wrote one of the more recent critiques of White's thesis. "In Genesis 2, in case you missed it, it tells you that we are here to take care of the earth."

That stewardship language is both a commandment and a warning. "And if we don't take care of the earth properly, we get booted," says Cardin. "And all of a sudden our Eden becomes all thistles and thorns."

To push this new thinking out to the pews, the national offices for each faith had to create stewardship tool kits and resource materials summarizing key environmental messages. According to Carmichael, environmental education packets went out to every Catholic parish, every synagogue, some 50,000 mainline Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches, and 35,000 Evangelical congregations.

There was a dream behind this drive to awaken the churches. Religious activism helped abolish slavery, pass child labor laws, and create a civil rights revolution. It also supported anti-war and anti-nuclear campaigns and it now advocates for living-wage legislation. The new dream went like this: activating the churches could help environmentalism revolutionize American life.

By 1997, more than 70 independent religious environmental groups were active in the United States, according to sociologist Ellingson in a book-length study published by the University of Chicago Press. A new religious environmental movement was emerging around the country, he says, and it was spreading a "caring-for-Creation" ethic.

Historian Lynn White Jr. would not live to see the religious environmentalism that he helped spark with his Christmas-season speech back in 1966. His famous thesis linked religious ideas with the rise of science and the decline of the environment, and it cemented his reputation as one of the most original historians of his era — one scholar called his *Science* paper "one of the most important interpretations of history to come out of medieval studies in the second half of the 20th century."

A new religious environmental movement was emerging around the country, and it was spreading a "caring-for-Creation" ethic.

When White retired from academic life in 1974, UCLA named him University Professor in recognition of his groundbreaking work and his many awards. On March 30, 1987, he died of heart failure at 79 years of age.

During the last decades of his life, White saw a steady stream of critical articles and books and op-ed pieces come across his desk. Many of them quarreled with his claim that the cause of the crisis was Judeo-Christian concepts about man's dominion over nature. What drew less attention were White's ideas for solving the crisis.

The first step towards the ecological health of the planet, according to White, would be rejecting "the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man." The second step would be finding an alternative. And here White, a life-long Christian, proposed a new patron saint for the age: St. Francis of Assisi, the saint who preached to the birds and spoke to the wolf and believed that men were part of a brotherhood in which all creatures, including Brother Ant, were equal. White called him "the greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history." Why? Because he so clearly rejected "the idea of man's limitless rule of Creation."

The final irony of White's famous critique: since the root of the crisis was religious, the remedy would have to be religious. White said the solution did not require more science or technology. The remedy required a rethinking of our religious ideas.

History may yet convert the historian into a prophet. The rethinking of religion, which began during his lifetime, would elevate stewardship and caring for Creation into the core values of the emerging religious environmental movement.

Last year, when Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church issued his encyclical on the environmental crisis, he seemed to be channeling Lynn White Jr. from 50 years earlier. In offering guidance to the planet's one billion Catholics, Francis announced, "We must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures." And the saint he cited in the encyclical was White's favorite: St. Francis of Assisi.

When he wasn't channeling White, the pope seemed to be answering Carl Sagan's call to restore the sacred in nature. Francis talked about "the mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face." In the language of a Catholic pope, you could almost hear echoes of the animism that populates the natural world with spirits.

Sagan, the scientist who wanted to restore a sense of the sacred, would see the beginnings of the new religious environmental movement that his advocacy helped start. But only the beginnings.

In 1994, a black and blue mark appeared on his arm, and blood tests revealed myelodysplasia, a rare blood disorder that science could not cure. A skeptic who did not believe in religious deathbed conversions, he died two years later on December 20, 1996. He was only 62 years old.

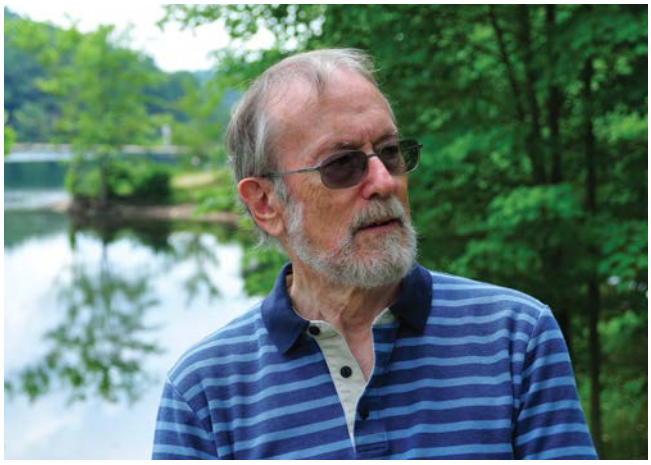
Three memorial ceremonies were held for him, the last in New York at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, an unusual site for remembering one of the world's most famous agnostics, but appropriate for a nonbeliever who called on the religions of the world to help science solve the environmental problems facing the planet.

— *fincham@mdsg.umd.edu*

The Third Wave
An Environmental Movement Reaches the Chesapeake

By Michael W. Fincham

If you had to pick two apostles to spread the gospel of faith-based environmentalism in the Chesapeake Bay region, you might not think of putting Charlie Conklin on the same team with Bill Breakey.



They seem at first glance an unlikely duo. One was an activist, the other an academic. But over a dozen years the two would recruit a band of like-minded colleagues and together they would try to insert a new brand of environmentalism into the region. The result of their work would be an organization now called the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake.

There are now 80 regional faith-based environmental groups like this around the country, according to sociologist Stephen Ellingson. Many of them are struggling to survive with small staffs and shaky funding, he says, but taken together they add up to a religious environmental movement.

This movement was late in arriving. Environmentalism in America, according to the historians, went through two major growth periods — without much input from the religious community. The progressive era (1890-1920) saw the creation of conservationist organizations like the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. And the 1960s and 1970s brought a second wave of new organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Greenpeace — all formed to protest environmental degradation.

It was the 1990s before a "third wave," a surge of faith-based environmentalism, began (see Crisis of Faith, p. 3). And it was 2004 before that began to focus on the Chesapeake. That's when Charlie Conklin and Bill Breakey, two Presbyterians, showed up at a Methodist church for a meeting that changed their lives.

Conklin was the activist, a long-time environmental volunteer whose passion was working with the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay and the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy. He comes across so naturally and consistently and enthusiastically gregarious that Breakey calls him "a connector." He seems to know nearly everybody in the region's religious and environmental communities.

Breakey was the academic, an emeritus professor from Johns Hopkins University, a psychiatrist trained to observe sharply and to quietly deliver precise observations in a precise diction that still echoes the accents of his Northern Ireland upbringing. At his church Breakey's passion was leading environmental ministries; at his work his focus was investigating and analyzing mental illness and poverty problems among people who were homeless in Maryland.

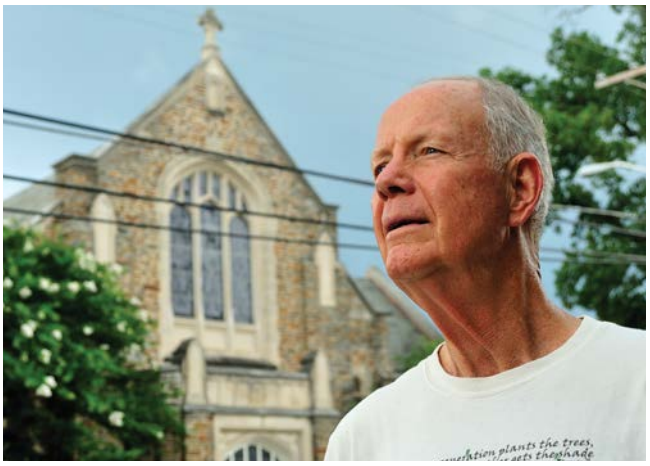
What the two men shared were their Presbyterianism, their passion about the environment, and personal qualities of resilience and persistence. They would need all those traits. They had some hard lessons to learn.

The life-altering meeting they attended was called the Holy Waters Conference. It was staged at Calvary United Methodist near Annapolis, a red-bricked, white-steepled house of worship perched above a scenic creek leading out to the Chesapeake Bay. The organizer, Cassandra Carmichael of the National Council of Churches, invited some 50 clergy and lay activists from local congregations to listen to an ecologist and a theologian. The ecologist gave a scientific overview of the problems facing the Bay and the theologian spoke about religious environmentalism. Carmichael thought the faith community could bring something that was missing from Chesapeake Bay restoration: moral passion.

The conference lasted a day, but its impact would last for years, launching the activist and academic on a long crusade to get churches to focus on Chesapeake Bay restoration. "It really inspired me," says Conklin. "The question was, 'What was the next step?'"

Conklin knew that new steps and new attitudes were needed after working for three decades at the huge plant that Bethlehem Steel once operated at Sparrow's Point at the mouth of the Patapsco River. "At Bethlehem Steel, we cared about one thing: how many tons we made that month," he says. "If crap went out in the water, crap went out in the water."

Breakey, the academic, believed environmentalism is "a moral issue and should be part of our faith practices." He also saw that the Bay could be a unifying focus for religious environmentalism. "For people in the central Maryland region," he says,



Two Presbyterians began recruiting *members of many faiths into an environmental campaign that became the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake. Bob Breakey (opposite page), a psychiatrist, was an active member of Maryland Presbyterian Church. Charlie Conklin (above, bottom), an environmentalist, was active with the Towson United Presbyterian Church. Cassandra Carmichael (above, top) inspired Breakey and Conklin to focus their environmental energies on Chesapeake Bay restoration.* PHOTOGRAPHS, MICHAEL W. FINCHAM

"the Chesapeake Bay is above anything else the symbol of what is good and what is wrong about our environmental stewardship."

But how do you bring together churches of different faiths? "If a Presbyterian goes over and tells a Baptist what to do," says Conklin, "he is not going to listen to him."

The first step for Conklin and Breakey was setting up a private session with Carmichael to get advice on tactics. The next step was pulling together a loose group of like-minded church-goers who wanted to take action to restore the Bay. During its early stages their ad-hoc group included a retired minister, an educator from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and other activists.

It was an impressive band of apostles and a persistent one. They met at irregular intervals, sometimes at a restaurant, sometimes at churches, occasionally at weekend conferences that drew in 40 people. As enthusiasm began building, the group gave themselves a name, the Chesapeake Covenant Congregations, and began to get some churches to sign an Earth Charter pledging to promote a Creation-care ethic in their worship and their personal lives.

After that surge, came the plateau. As the years were going by, new churches were slow to sign up, and the group found itself still struggling to figure out a vision and a structure. Those early years taught the first hard lesson: they needed help.

Five years into their campaign, the Chesapeake Covenant group launched a strategic planning process, and Conklin, "the connector," got advice from a number of leaders already savvy about setting up organizations. Their advisors included Fran Flanigan, former head of the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, Jim Gracie of Trout Unlimited, and Nina Beth Cardin, a well-known community rabbi.

In Cardin they got an activist for women's rights and environmental causes who'd already learned some lessons about setbacks. In New York she founded the Jewish Women's Resource Center as early as 1978, but had to wait another decade before the Jewish Theological Seminary agreed to graduate Cardin and other women from its rabbi ordination program. In 2006 she founded the Baltimore Jewish Environmental Network, only to learn that religious environmentalism can also be slow to catch on. "I just thought that if I told people about it and how it was essentially part of the Jewish theology — that it would happen," she says. "And, huh? It didn't happen."

Progress began to happen for this largely Christian group after it finished its strategic planning, rebranded itself as the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC), and shortly thereafter made Rabbi Cardin chair of the board of trustees. "It was under the leadership of Nina that we really expanded," says Conklin. The group went looking more aggressively for funding and won support from a number of sources. "We found funds, hired staff, so we built our ground game," says Cardin. "We had people go out and meet with congregations, bringing them ideas, resources, and money."

On June 22, 2010, the re-organized group gave itself a coming-out party. It sent out invitations and drew an estimated 60 supporters to the Bolton Street Synagogue in Baltimore to witness a ceremony of their own design: the joint signing of a pledge document titled "Covenanting for Creation."

What the covenant said was probably less important than who signed it. To build their brand, the covenant group recruited local and state-wide leaders from the Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Quaker, Muslim, and Jewish faith communities.

One of the signers was Eugene Sutton, the first African American to be elected Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland. His appearance at the ceremony was "a huge deal" for the new covenant group, says Rabbi Cardin, who personally recruited the bishop. The cleric was on the board of trustees for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and as the first black Episcopal bishop he was already well known for saying "I want to be known as the first *green* bishop." With his public standing, says Cardin, Sutton

helped legitimize the idea that the faith community could work with the environmental community.

That was a new idea at the time. A 1991 survey of the Maryland environmental movement had found little connection between the environmental and religious communities, a disconnect that represented a missed opportunity for encouraging environmental activism. "It's important to appeal to the values of different kinds of people," says Verna Harrison, who helped send seed money to the Interfaith Partners when she was executive director of the Campbell Foundation. "Sometimes facts aren't what make people change behavior."

About five years ago, Cardin noticed "a sea change" of sorts. "The environmental community looked askance at the faith community," says Cardin. "Then all of a sudden everybody in the environmental community was saying, 'We've been at this for 20 or 30 years already, and we are just not getting anywhere. We need new partners, new advocates, new constituents.'"

Sensing opportunity, Cardin helped the group go looking for new partners. To connect with the secular environmental movement, it launched new projects with the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay and collaborated with groups like Bluewater Baltimore, the Watershed Stewards Academy of Anne Arundel County, and the Maryland Sea Grant Extension Program. "In an ecosystem where there are others already working," says Cardin, "the greatest way to thrive is to partner with others in your ecosystem."

The founders for Interfaith Partners had another lesson to learn. Many of their churches, they discovered, were initially more interested in fixing their properties than in reviving their faith practices through environmental activism. Breakey, who still serves on the board of trustees, puts it this way: "It is easier to engage people by saying we would like to help you improve your church property, so you won't have to pay this stormwater fee." It is, he says, less persuasive "to say we would like you to examine your faith and consider God's role in your life and your connection to the universe."

A community rabbi and author, *Nina Beth Cardin has helped found or lead a number of environmental organizations, including the Baltimore Jewish Environmental Network, the Baltimore Orchard Project, and the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake.* PHOTOGRAPH, MICHAEL W. FINCHAM

But practicality can lead to spiritual payoffs. Those grant dollars and tax savings open a church door that the Interfaith Partners can walk through, carrying a message about Creation care (see The Road to Empowering, p. 11). The church projects — digging and planting and maintaining trees and rain gardens, rain barrels and cisterns — help church members take responsibility for their slice of the environment. "We tell them, 'We don't make the rain,' " says Rose, " 'but we do make the runoff.' " Taking responsibility and taking action are, at the very least, the beginning of an environmental ethic, a faith-based ethic that may over time make a difference that matters at church and at home.

It took a while, but the faith-based environmental movement, a small but growing wave of new groups, has now seeped into the largely secular world of Chesapeake Bay environmentalism.

The idea that became the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake began with two men, an activist and an academic, but it now exists as a professionally staffed organization, a group that has set up workshops, tree plantings, and stormwater projects with more than 80 churches.

Now other faith-based groups are also active in Bay restoration. Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), a long-established national organization, helps churches in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia reduce their energy needs. The Chesapeake Interfaith Environmental Group (CIEG), organized by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, connects churches in the Annapolis area. Around D.C., newer, smaller groups like Green Muslims and Eco-Sikh are starting to organize.

"They are certainly having an impact," says Nick DiPasquale. As director of the six-state Chesapeake Bay Program for the Environmental Protection Agency, he is a big fan of faith-based environmentalism. "This is a previously untapped resource," he says. "It mobilizes a workforce that can actually get projects done." County governments are now counting church projects in stormwater reductions toward the water improvement goals the counties are required to meet under the new Bay pollution diet.

The greatest impact of these church projects, however, is not in reducing runoff, but in raising interest in restoration among the faithful. "It capitalizes on their interest in stewardship theology," says DiPasquale, "that whole idea that we have to take care of this planet."

Whether all these new religious groups will go forth and multiply is not clear. But their potential is obvious, both to DiPasquale and to Cassandra Carmichael, the woman who first inspired Conklin and Breakey back in 2004. Now executive director for the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, she points to polls that say half the people in America go to church. "I am biased," says Carmichael, "but in my view the secular environmental movement — they might be able to put a finger in the dike here and there — but they are never going to make the changes they envision without the faith community."

— *fincham@mdsg.umd.edu*

The Road to Empowering

In the Field with Faith-based Environmentalists

By Michael W. Fincham

Jodi Rose found her calling at a red light. She was on the road that morning driving to work, when she decided work wasn't driving her soul.

Her job at the time was running environmental site assessments of inner-city properties in Indianapolis, Indiana. She was managing soil and groundwater remediation projects and handling due-diligence property research, and her clients were usually lawyers and bankers and real estate developers who wanted to buy or flip or develop properties in depressed neighborhoods. Were there any problems with these sites? Were there buried tanks, groundwater contamination, soil contamination, confused title records? Were there any economic liabilities attached to the site, any costs and cleanup problems left over from earlier owners or industries? It was her job to find out.

On this watershed morning she braked to a stop at a red light at an inner-city intersection, and while she was waiting for the light to change she watched an elderly African American man wobble slowly across the street in front of her car. He was clearly disheveled, struggling with his cane. She could see his balance was shaky, she guessed he was homeless, she thought he didn't know where he was going. She watched, staring out the window. And then she began to cry.

She was, she knew, weeping for herself. During her weekends she was volunteering for Catholic projects focused on social and environmental justice. During her workweek she was analyzing property problems for real estate deals that did little to fix these neighborhoods. She was working in neighborhoods full of struggling people, so many of them looking lost and forgotten in the midst of urban decay and environmental degradation.

Rain gardens need weeding, *so Belinda Thomas, wife of the minister, cleans up one of the five gardens at Empowering Believers Church of the Apostolic Faith in Glen Burnie, Maryland.* PHOTOGRAPH, MICHAEL W. FINCHAM

Jodi Rose got the job she wanted: *Executive Director for the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, a religious environmental group that recruits churches into the ongoing effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay.* PHOTOGRAPH, MICHAEL W. FINCHAM

And nothing she was doing was going to improve their lives, she realized: none of her site assessments, none of the deals by the bankers and developers.

And none of this fit her own sense of who she was and what her mission in life should be. I'm working for the wrong people, she thought. I'm done, she told herself.

Seven years later, another lifetime later, Rose is on the road again on a bright muggy Sunday in Maryland, but she knows exactly where she's going today: to three ceremonies at three separate churches. Believers will gather to talk and pray and conduct blessings for the rain gardens and rain barrels and cisterns they helped plan and install on their church property — all in hopes of helping restore the creeks and rivers and mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay.

Rose has another kind of job now. She's executive director for an organization called the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC). She works with Catholics and Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals, Jews and Muslims and Buddhists. Her job is recruiting and educating faith congregations who want to do a better job of protecting the environment and restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Groups like IPC are part of a religious environmental movement that arrived late in the Chesapeake region but hopes to energize the 33-year effort to restore the country's largest estuary.

The first stop for Rose on today's road trip will be the Empowering Believers Church of the Apostolic Faith. The religion is Pentecostal, the congregation is African American, and their church is located on Marley Neck, a swath of land southeast of Baltimore that's bracketed by two large creeks and one wide river, the Patapsco. The north side of this wide neck is where the mouth of the river meets the mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay. The church is struggling with frequent flooding from stormwater runoff.

Her group, the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, began with a small band of activists, environmentalists, and scientists, many of them connected with progressive churches in the Towson area (see The Third Wave, p. 8). "They all felt 'Here we are, planted near this awesome national treasure in the Chesapeake watershed,'" says Rose, "'and our preachers and our churches aren't talking about this at all.'"

The new group started talking and kept talking for several years, meeting sometimes in churches, sometimes at a restaurant outside of Baltimore. They set up a steering committee, gave themselves a name, then another name. During a year-long strategic planning process, they came to a crossroads of sorts and decided to brand themselves as the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake.

Jodi Rose already knew what you do at a crossroads: you take the road less traveled. When she applied to the Interfaith Partners for the job of tree program manager, the trustees told her that job would have to wait while they found a new executive director. As she had at the stoplight years earlier, Rose recognized a watershed moment. "If you are going to follow your heart, you've got to be willing to go down those unclear byways and pathways," she says. At this intersection she saw a green light. To the trustees looking for a director, she said, "Well, you should interview me."

"The rest is history," she likes to say, but the rest would be hard work. She had the job that fit her spiritual journey, but it came with a tiny staff, an uncertain funding base, and an ambitious mission. How do you go about planting and growing faith-based environmentalism in an arena dominated by large, long-standing secular environmental organizations?

Apparently you hit the road. Rose and her three staff members spend a lot of time driving the roads as environmental missionaries to faith communities. Their primary job is recruiting churches into the cause of Bay restoration — and then educating them about what that means. They create and deliver talks and guest sermons, workshops, and toolkits — all designed with two goals in mind: to review the problems facing the Chesapeake and to re-examine religious concepts about stewardship and the human responsibility to care for Creation.

But that's not the hardest work. When Rose and her staff are not driving the roads or writing talks and sermons, they have to work on finding funding. That means donor research, networking, proposal writing, and grants management. Without the funds, most cash-strapped churches cannot afford to embark on any ambitious environmental restoration projects.

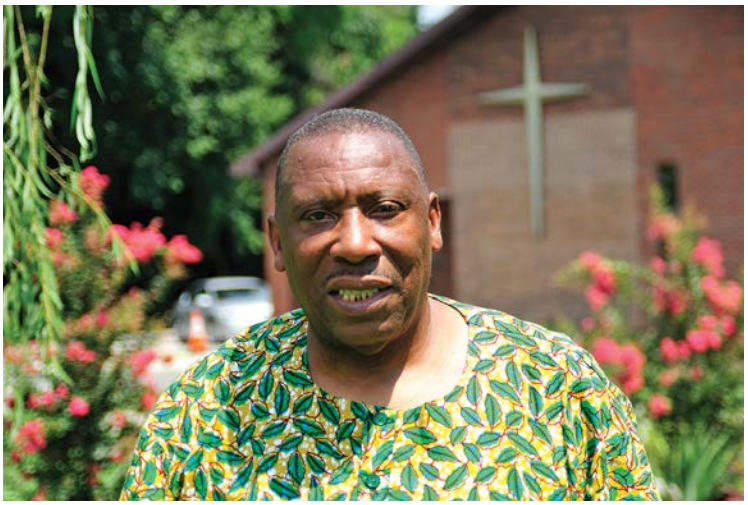
That's where her experience in the world of environmental consulting probably helped Rose get hired. In her job interview she came across as Catholic, passionate, articulate — and practical, says Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin, who was then chairing the board of trustees. "She can talk the God talk — she does that mov-

ingly — and she can crunch the numbers," says Cardin. "And we needed that."

The Empowering Believers Church clearly needed the number crunching and the fund-raising. Without it there would be no gathering of churchgoers waiting at Marley Neck to share some faith talk with Rose and celebrate their rain gardens and rain barrels and drainage ditches.

As she drives into the parking lot, Rose sees a church that's been struggling and surviving and growing for 53 years. It was born back in 1963 when a small wooden barracks was hauled here from the nearby Fort Meade army base and then set up as a house of worship in a country-like setting. The old barracks structure still stands, but now it's connected to the large, red-brick main church that the growing congregation was later able to build. The two buildings, the old and the new, the frame and the brick, stand linked together on low-lying, largely flat land in what's now a somewhat suburban neighborhood dotted with modest, one-story ranch houses set on bright green lawns.

The church lot, stretching between two roads, may look flat and level, but it has a recent history of flooding dramatically during large rain storms. Whenever a major storm would pass through, Bishop Larry Lee Thomas would walk out of his small frame house and find a lake sitting between him and his church. Several feet of water would be covering the parking lot, the green lawns, the sidewalks. "Sometimes it would flood so high we could not get into our church," he says. His wife, Belinda, is more emphatic: "You almost needed a boat to get on the property."



Flooding would follow most major storms, *shutting down services at the Empowering Believers Church. The solution included a trench drain, cisterns, and five rain gardens like the one behind Bishop Larry Lee Thomas. "They transformed this place," says the bishop, who has recruited other churches into restoration work. "Now we have a story to tell."* PHOTOGRAPHS, INTERFAITH PARTNERS FOR THE CHESAPEAKE (ABOVE, TOP); MICHAEL W. FINCHAM (ABOVE, BOTTOM)

The congregation tried prayers and it tried petitioning the county government — and it soon learned that stormwater fixes would cost more than the congregation could afford. The church had to find its own solution — and it did. Whenever the floodwaters rose, Bishop Thomas would cancel church services, borrow hoses from the fire department, and pump all the water off the lot and down into a nearby storm drain.

Stormwater runoff is a problem for a lot of churches — but for the Interfaith Partners it's an opportunity, a chance for the group to recruit new congregations into faith-based environmentalism. Bishop Thomas, for example, was willing to sign up for workshops on caring for Creation when the Interfaith Partners told him they could get the money to solve his flooding problem. "That's when they put the meat on the bones," he says.

Funding was available because stormwater runoff is one of the major threats to ecosystem restoration in the Chesapeake, and churches are known to be sources for frequent runoff. As rainwater slips off their steeples and slanted rooftops, it slides across their large, paved parking lots, sucking up leaf debris and roof debris, oil drippings and automobile fluids, fertilizers and pesticides, sediment and pet wastes. Runoff from churches sweeps these and other pollutants into the county storm drains that connect with the creeks that connect with the rivers that connect with the mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay.

At the Empowering Believers Church, a lot of technical expertise would have to go into solving its stormwater flooding. Any design for stormwater control had to do double duty: keep runoff from the roads from flooding the church and keep runoff from the church from flowing off the property and into storm drains and creeks. All this site work would not be cheap. A lot of fund-raising expertise would be needed before the first shovel moved the first pile of dirt.

To participate in projects like this, Rose has the IPC connect and collaborate with a number of other players in the interconnected world of secular environmentalism. Their key partner, the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, did "the heavy lifting" for fund-raising, says Rose, by creating a program called Riverwise Congregations that will help 22 churches in Anne Arundel County.

Other partners participating in these projects would include the Anne Arundel County Watershed Stewards Academy,

Large churches have large parking lots, *creating strong stormwater runoff. Lou Etgen of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay checks the solution he helped set up for St. Luke's Lutheran Church (left): a drainage ditch topped with cobble rocks to slow down rushing water. Workers at the Empowering Believers Church (right) use a different solution: a series of rain gardens to absorb runoff.* PHOTOGRAPHS, MICHAEL W. FINCHAM (LEFT) AND INTERFAITH PARTNERS FOR THE CHESAPEAKE (RIGHT)

and the Maryland Sea Grant Extension Program, groups which bring grant-writing savvy, teaching skill, technical expertise, local connections, and outreach experience. Together they would win grants from programs within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and the Anne Arundel County government.

All those connections would be needed. The final solution for Empowering Believers would be a nine-part retrofit: a trench drain by one road, a raised planting along the church, an overflow zone by the parking lot, two cisterns, and five large, sponge-like rain gardens strategically sited to gather, hold, and absorb runoff. All this engineering will not only cut flooding, it will also reduce the stormwater management fee (or "rain tax") that the county charges to properties that create large runoff surges.

What the Interfaith Partners group brings to interconnected projects like this is a combination of skills: an expressed commitment to religious values, familiarity with faith rituals and traditions, and an ability to communicate with congregations through the language of faith. As a former consultant Rose can talk the money talk and the technical talk that professional environmentalists are comfortable with. And she can talk the other talk, what Rabbi Cardin calls "the God talk," the conversations that resonate so powerfully with faith congregations.

For Lou Etgen the benefits of collaborating with Rose and the Interfaith Partners were obvious. He is the Maryland state director for the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, a group focused on reaching out to 17.5 million people living in the Chesapeake watershed — many of whom go to church. Getting an environmental message to the churches seemed a good way of getting a message to their members. And it's a message that could stick. "In essence, it's environmentalism from the pulpit," says Etgen. "When your spiritual leader says you need to take care of the earth, it's a pretty powerful thing."

It certainly seems a powerful thing at Empowering Believers on this Sunday afternoon as Bishop Thomas gathers church members around him on their green, unflooded lawn. Leading them through a blessing of their rain gardens and rain barrels and cisterns, the bishop launches a call-and-response prayer. "God says to Isaiah, 'See I am doing a new thing,'" And his congregation responds, "We are doing a new thing, we are called to restore Creation."

There are prayers and there are speeches from the key players: Lou Etgen, who supervised all the earth-moving work for the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay; Suzanne Etgen, who ran the Watershed Stewards Academy that trained two members of the congregation; and Jodi Rose, who organized the workshops in caring for Creation.

It's clear from the speeches and the prayers that there are two payoffs from all the fund-raising and earth moving. For the Bay there will be a reduction in runoff pumped into storm drains. And for this faith community there will be a refocusing on the Biblical command to care for the environment.

The bishop explains later that he has begun a new ministry designed to focus his flock on maintaining all these repairs to their piece of the Bay watershed. With his broad shoulders and barrel chest, he looks like a minister a congregation will follow. "We call it the Eden Ministry," he says, "because in the Garden of Eden, God gave instructions to Adam to take care of the earth. This is what we call a lifelong ministry."

For Rose and her partners, the pattern is set for the rest of the afternoon. Two more road trips, two more tours of rain gardens and drainage ditches, then more speeches, more prayers, two more churches committed to "doing a new thing."

At the second church, St. John's Lutheran in Linthicum Heights, the problem was out behind the church: a large, paved parking lot slants back to a fence and then tilts downhill, creating a perfect funnel for channeling stormwater straight at a roadside storm drain. The

solutions here are simpler: two rain gardens and a long trench topped with rock cobble and lined with soils to filter the water it catches.

At the third church for the day, the Ark and the Dove Presbyterian, the parking lot was also the problem. It tilts downhill towards the church, sliding water towards the front door of the building and then down along the entrance drive and into the nearest street drain. The solutions: a rain barrel, a rain garden, and a long cobble-filled trench to trap water running off the hillside above the church.

When Rose and her partners arrive at the Ark and the Dove, twenty people are waiting by the front door with cookies and lemonade. The prayers here are the same, and so are most of the speeches. And the end result is another example of the unusual and upbeat melding of religious and secular environmentalism that may become a more familiar part of Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts.

In his speech Lou Etgen from the Alliance tells the congregation that there are 22 churches in the county trying to do what the Ark and Dove is doing: cut down the runoff from their lands. When he adds up all the rain barrels and gardens and trenches at all those churches, he estimates these retrofits are handling and absorbing the runoff and pollutants from 27.6 acres of hard-packed parking surface.

Does the road to Bay restoration run through churches like Empowering Believers and St. John's Lutheran and the Ark and the Dove?

It might. If a lot of churches hear the call to try a new thing and if they respond as these churches have. These faith-based projects, small and scattered, do have measurable impact. In Anne Arundel County these stormwater projects at 22 churches will keep 47 pounds of phosphorus, 228 pounds of nitrogen, and 27 tons of sediment out of the creeks and rivers of the estuary every year.

What if you could multiply those numbers by a thousand? By two thousand? It's a wild guess what the future impact of faith-based environmentalism could be, but there are some seductive numbers: more than 5,300 houses of worship are listed in Maryland alone, more than 25,000 in the watershed.

To reach all those people in the pews, you have to reach all the ministers and rabbis in the pulpits. Today the Interfaith Partnership for the Chesapeake is working with the Alliance to recruit churches into restoration work; the Chesapeake Interfaith Environmental Group is trying to do the same in the Annapolis area, working with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Ten years ago there were no multi-faith organizations like this in the region, and the large secular organizations had yet to reach out aggressively to all those faith communities.

As he finishes his speech at the Ark and the Dove, Lou Etgen from the Alliance tries to offer hope about the future. Tall and broad-faced, he delivers his message in a strong, friendly voice. "It takes actions like this — on these small scales — everywhere on the whole Chesapeake watershed," he says, "if we are going to have a clean Bay to live around and be a part of."

It's a message of hope that's actually a message of faith. Etgen is offering the classic faith of the secular environmentalist: if politicians make all the right policy decisions, if more people make the right personal decisions, if farms reduce their nutrient runoff, if cities reduce their stormwater runoff — then perhaps we can restore the Chesapeake Bay.

But what if those "ifs" don't work out? In her speech Jodi Rose offers the faith of the religious environmentalist. "Is all this really making a difference?" she asks, calling up the existential doubt that can haunt any environmentalist. And she answers with lines from a Catholic prayer honoring a recent martyr, "We can only do what is our part in this magnificent enterprise that is God's world, God's kingdom. And we trust that is what we are called to do."

She ends by thanking the congregation for doing their part, for hearing the call and responding, perhaps remembering her own call-and-response moment years ago at a stoplight in Indianapolis. To live as a Christian is to act as an environmentalist.

Perhaps this is what faith-based fervor can add to secular environmentalism: it turns environmental issues into moral issues. And saving the Bay becomes part of saving your soul.

— fincham@mdsg.umd.edu

Letter from the Eastern Shore

Faith Flies in the Face of Facts

Below is an excerpt from a letter about religion and environmentalism jointly written by Andrew Webster, a devout Methodist and a resident of an Eastern Shore community near Deal Island, Maryland, and Michael Paolisso, an anthropologist at the University of Maryland College Park. You can read the complete letter at: **www.chesapeakequarterly.net/faith-letter**

Sandy Rodgers

Today, we find faith and religion to be essential to the future and survival of the communities and environment of the Deal Island peninsula. The problems we face include changes in the community and in the environment. The local economy and demographics are shifting with fewer young people becoming watermen and more retirees and second-home owners moving into the region. At the same time, sea levels are rising and the land is subsiding, bringing increased erosion and more frequent flooding. How do we handle these issues?

Maryland Sea Grant College
4321 Hartwick Road, Suite 300
University System of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20740

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S.Postage
PAID
Permit No. 04386
College Park, MD

Chesapeake Quarterly is printed on recycled paper, processed chlorine free, using soy-based inks

Watershed Stewardship: An Ethic in Action

As the Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake tries to become an important player in the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, it is relying in many counties on the work of two key partners: the Watershed Stewards Academy program and the Maryland Sea Grant Extension Program.

It seems an obvious fit, the connection between the Interfaith Partners and the Watershed Stewards Academy training program. The mission for the religious group is recruiting and educating church congregations about restoration focused on the Bay. And the mission for the training program is recruiting and teaching volunteers to diagnose and respond to stormwater runoff problems. The programs train master watershed stewards who can then educate others and serve as trusted sources of information for communities trying to manage runoff.

For a number of congregations, the Interfaith Partners enrolls key members in a local academy. "We sent people to get trained for six or eight months," says Bishop Thomas of the Empowering Believers Church, "and those are the ones I am looking for to keep us moving in the right direction."

Another practical fit: the connection between the Interfaith Partners and the watershed specialists of the Maryland Sea Grant Extension program. Their mission: helping local governments and citizens groups tackle water-quality problems across the state. Their approach: provide churches with technical and fund-raising expertise. Specialists can survey church grounds and buildings, identify runoff problems, design possible solutions, and help develop grant proposals for funding assistance.

"They serve as a kind of community consulting service," says Jodi Rose, executive director for the Interfaith Partners. "We leverage them as a great community resource."

Their community expertise also helped set up some of those Watershed Stewards Academy training programs that the Interfaith Partners relies on for educating church-goers. Extension worked with community partners to set up these programs in Cecil and St. Mary's Counties and in the National Capital Region, which also includes Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

Four Extension specialists work with academies around Maryland. Jennifer Dindinger and Eric Buehl are helping with programs at the Watershed Stewards Academy in Cecil County and Jackie Takacs organized the new academy in St. Mary's County. Amanda Rockler developed the plan that established standards and practices for the National Capital Region program and is working on a feasibility study for creating a separate academy in Montgomery County.

It's clearly a natural fit, this connection between the training programs and the watershed specialists and the churches. After all, the concept of stewardship, so important to contemporary environmental restoration, has its roots in both the Bible and the Qur'an, the founding documents for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

— *M.W.F.*

We Need Your Help: Take Our Reader Survey

Chesapeake Quarterly covers pressing issues facing the Bay and its watershed.

Now we want to hear from you. What topics would you like us to write about? Do you also read the magazine online? Whether you're a longtime or new reader, your answers will help us cover what you care about.

Please take a five-minute online survey at chesapeakequarterly.net/survey.

For more information or to request a paper copy of the survey, call us at 301.405.6377 or send an email to communications@mdsg.umd.edu.