

Education and Literacy for Earth Stewardship at Montreat Presbyterian

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In [the Lord’s] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.” (Job 12:7-10)

The strong emphasis of Presbyterians for study of God’s word permeates the Earth stewardship efforts of the Montreat congregation. Our aim is to have a solid and accurate Biblically based knowledge and understanding of how we as followers of Jesus Christ are to care for God’s Creation.

The church’s Christian Education Committee capitalized on the founding of the Earth Ministry Team in 2010 to create innovative and thoughtful programs. Thus, the Wednesday afternoon Adult Education class offered courses including “*Creation as the Theater of God’s Glory: Clues for a World on the Edge*,” a study of books including Genesis and Job and the works of John Calvin, among others, for a historical and modern perspective on Earth care, and also “*Earth’s Climate and the Community of Faith: Perspectives from Theology and Science*.” The classes were led by the [Earth Stewardship Theologian](#) for MPC, who also is working with other churches.



Speakers for the program, “Earth’s Climate and the Community of Faith: Perspectives from Theology and Science,” were Jim Weyman, a professional meteorologist, Eileen Shea, an environmental conservation scientist, and Cam Murchison, an ordained minister (pictured left to right).

For the congregation and its friends, periodic outings to learn about current issues in the environment are arranged. Thus, groups of about a dozen folks have attended the movie, “*The Last Mountain*,” concerning mountaintop removal coal-mining operations in nearby Appalachian communities, and a lecture on climate disruption by a Nobel laureate at a nearby college. As part of another series of classes, a session on “*Unfolding the Sacred through Photography*” used images taken by a member of the congregation and Scripture. Asheville is home to a world center for the archiving and analysis of information concerning Earth’s weather and climate. Thus, 31 residents of Black Mountain and Montreat found a treasure trove awaiting them there in 2014 during a comprehensive and informative tour of the world-renowned U.S. National Climatic Data Center. A smaller group



camped at Mt. Mitchell, pictured here, and enjoyed a nature education program. A future class will go outdoors for a contemplative walk on the Prayer Path of *Montreat Conference Center*¹.

Beyond the congregation, and to augment the efforts of our Earth theologian, members of the Earth Ministry Team have spoken to a combined Sunday School class of 55 individuals at a nearby church concerning the nuts and bolts of starting an Earth Care Congregation program, and presented information about Earth Care to both a national conference and a national webinar of the *North American Association for Environmental Education*². We also were invited to present information to a national webinar on best practices for Christian Education.

Sources of Information and Links:

PCUSA Environmental Ministries—Here are numerous print and video study guides and resources for personal and group use, including guides for leaders of classes. Topics include eco-justice, Bible lessons, and climate issues, etc. See <http://gamc.pcusa.org/browse/resources-resource/ministries/environment/>.

Earth Ministry—Provides resources to help individuals, congregations, clergy, and denominations connect their faith with caring for the environment in practical ways. See <http://earthministry.org/>.

¹ <http://www.montreat.org/>

² <http://www.naaee.net/>