



PHP POST

Spring 2018 | Presbyterian Hunger Program | pcusa.org/hunger

Earth Day

Puerto Rico's Rural Recovery: Farmer-to-Farmer Solidarity Brigades

Cynthia Mellon, Climate Justice Policy Coordinator for Climate Justice Alliance

In September 2017, Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico full-force, cutting a swath of destruction across the island. In the wake of the Category 4 storm, while U.S. and Puerto Rican elected officials leveled criticism at each other over the handling of relief support, it became clear that the suffering of Puerto Rico's 3.4 million residents was not going to end any time soon. After six months, much of the island is still without electricity and an uncountable number of homes remain uninhabitable. Receiving less attention, however, is the state of Puerto Rico's farmland, and the precarious nature of the island's access to food.

In January, a group of U.S.-based farmers and urban growers, carpenters, and natural builders traveled to Puerto Rico in small, disciplined brigades to provide support to Puerto Rican growers as they rebuild their homes and recover their farms. The effort was led by the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) and the Puerto Rican group Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica. The brigades are part of CJA's national campaign #OurPowerPuertoRico, which supports a just, regenerative rebuilding of Puerto Rico, led by Puerto Ricans and centered on renewable energy, a green economy, food sovereignty, and Puerto Rico's self-sufficiency. A strategic and grantee partner of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, CJA links over 50 community organizations, movement networks, and support organizations. Its members are Indigenous, African American, Latino, Asian Pacific Islander, and poor white communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis in North America.

For 28 years, Organización Boricúa has functioned as a collective of small and medium-size organic growers. Through its network of 135 farms, the group works promoting social justice and food sovereignty throughout the island. Rooted in an agroecology that embraces Puerto Rico's traditional farming knowledge, Organización Boricúa strongly emphasizes mutual support and solidarity among its

members. It also has a long history of coordinating agricultural exchanges and work brigades with farming organizations in different countries.

For Instance, Black Dirt Farm Collective, an organization made up of mainly young Black agrarians committed to connecting Black people to the land, has been building solidarity with Organización Boricúa for several years. When the call came to send farmers to Puerto Rico, Black Dirt was ready, along with several other Latino, Black, and Indigenous farm and food-focused groups across the U.S.

Puerto Rico's farmers face numerous problems and many will not be able to plant

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Cynthia Mellon

Shakara Tyler and Antonio Rafael clearing weeds and debris in raised beds in Puerto Rico.

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Taking or Giving to God's Creation?

Rebecca Barnes, Coordinator for Presbyterian Hunger Program

Earth Day (April 22) typically falls within days of our "Thunder Over Louisville" fireworks show. The irony never escapes me as planes release carbon emissions and disturb typical air patterns for birds, attendees leave Waterfront Park strewn with litter, and the Ohio River becomes home to all the particulate matter.

Human ventures and celebrations are sadly too often separate from the natural world. Biblical scholar Patricia Tull explains that biblical Hebrew had no separate words for "human culture" and "nature." What a long way we've come from this biblical witness, of being part and parcel of the natural world.

How this Earth Day might we reclaim our position as part of God's Creation, not separate from it? How might our spring festivities, human celebrations, and even economic endeavors be in harmony with the world?

I am grateful for the witness of Presbyterians and partners here and around the world who show us what it means to take seriously (and joyfully!) our human vocation to "serve and preserve" the garden (Genesis 2:15). We care for all people and all creation in this vocation. PHP grant partners like those featured here, have much to teach us.

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— ISAIAH 58

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The environmental, hunger and poverty work of PHP is made possible through Presbyterian contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing (usually given at Palm

Sunday and Easter, but accepted throughout the year). We are grateful for your gifts that support a thriving earth and the well-being of all people!

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Pope Meets with Indigenous Communities in Peru

Amazonic tribes and Andean communities are celebrated by Pope Francis as models for caring for our common home

By Jed Koball, Mission Co-worker for Joining Hands Peru

On a hot and humid January day, gathered in the town of Puerto Maldonado in a region of the Amazon Rainforest devastated by massive deforestation and the contamination of rivers from toxic metals and oil spills, indigenous leaders and environmental activists anxiously awaited to hear what truth the author of *Laudato Si* would speak to the powers of destruction of our common home. It was here that Pope Francis chose to meet with indigenous communities to hear their cries and to offer his first public statements during his visit to Peru.

Speaking in an intimate space with the representatives of various Amazonic tribes and Andean communities, the Pope said, "For some people, you are considered an obstacle because you are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us, which is to care for our common home. You are not a model of life of yesteryear; you are a model of living that we must recuperate now."

Addressing more directly the historical challenges of the Church and all humanity, the Pope continued, "Special care is demanded of us, lest we allow ourselves to be ensnared by ideological forms of colonialism, disguised as progress, that slowly but surely dissipate cultural identities and establish a uniform, single and weak way of thinking."

Encouraged by Pope Francis' platform to restore harmonious relations between the Earth and humanity, Red Uniendo Manos Peru – the Joining Hands network in Peru – signed onto a letter delivered directly to the Pope at his residence in Lima. The



Jed Koball

Leaders of the community of Santa Rosa de Sacco in the province of La Oroya rest on the hillside overlooking the town after a day of exploring clean water sources to further their reforestation and remediation efforts in the area.

letter, written by a network of Peruvian civil society organizations (of which Red Uniendo Manos Peru is an active member) addresses the grave human, environmental, cultural and economic impacts of the extractive industry in Peru:

"There is an imposition of a series of economic activities in countries such as Peru that are seen geopolitically only as producers of raw materials at low cost and cheap labor, and subservient to industrialized countries."

Pope Francis' words in Puerto Maldonado appeared to respond directly to the concerns of our partners as he proclaimed, "We cannot use goods meant for all as consumerist greed dictates. Limits have to be set that can help preserve us from all plans of massive destruction of the habitat that makes us who we are."

The irony that presented itself during the Pope's visit with the indigenous leaders in Puerto Maldonado was the presence of Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski who carefully tried to position himself near the Pope.

Among legislation passed under President Kuczynski's watch was the weakening of sulfur-dioxide emissions standards in the Andean town of La Oroya, which is already considered to be one of the ten most contaminated cities in the world, where nearly 99% of the children have been tested to have severe lead poisoning, among other toxic metals and contaminants. The cause of the contamination is a metals smelter owned by a U.S. holding company.

While the smelter filed bankruptcy nearly nine years ago, Kuczynski initiated his

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Environmental Victories

If we are honest, 2017 was a hard year when it came to the care of God's creation. On the positive, we had more certified Earth Care Congregations than ever; we had lots of Presbyterian and other increased faith-based environmental organizing; and the nations of the world continued to work towards honoring the Paris Agreement (United Nations climate talks), even if U.S. governmental participation was lagging.

Yet it was also a year of huge roll-backs in our country for environmental protections, and 2018 doesn't look to be much better. We will have to fight hard to maintain current levels of environmental protections, to preserve economic incentives for renewable energy, to defend wild places and land/resource rights, and to continue to be educated—and educating—on significant environmental justice issues.

Knowing the hard path that lies ahead, we also lift up the good news we have to celebrate.

- For the first time, scientists have shown through direct observations of the ozone hole that levels of ozone-destroying chlorine are declining, resulting in about 20 percent less ozone depletion during the Antarctic winter than there was in 2005. www.goodnewsnetwork.org/nasa-sees-first-direct-proof-ozone-hole-recovery/
- In 2016, about 15% of the electricity generated by utility-scale facilities in the United States came from renewable energy sources: water, wind, biomass, solar, geothermal. An estimated additional 19 billion kWh was generated by small-scale solar photovoltaic systems. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, April 2017)
- Many countries are edging closer to international targets to protect 17 percent of lands and inland waters by 2020. <http://vancouversun.com/opinion/op-ed/opinion-ten-environmental-success-stories-and-indicators-in-2017>
- Wildlife Foundation celebrates better care for wildlife with 89 Singapore establishments removing shark products, two new wetland protected areas in Mexico, 1000 new species discovered in Southeast Asia, an increase in the population of an endangered river dolphin in Pakistan, an ivory ban in Hong Kong, and more. http://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/successes/.
- Eleven countries continued their plan to build a wall of trees from east to west across Africa in order to push back the desert. In Senegal, it's already working. *BBC World Hacks*
- Indonesia pledged \$1 billion to clean up plastic from its seas, Kenya announced a ban on plastic bags, and Chile said it will ban them in its coastal cities. 30 countries now have existing or impending bans in place. *ABC*



Small and big victories are worth noting, and necessary for the long-term sustaining of our efforts!

Sense of Place: Earth Day Sunday Liturgy 2018

Creation Justice Ministries, PHP's main ecumenical partner on caring for creation, produces an Earth Day Sunday resource each year. Many Presbyterian congregations use this as a worship and/or educational resource. In 2018, the theme is "Sense of Place," and it can be downloaded at www.creationjustice.org/place.html. Excerpted here are some of the worship elements. For the land acknowledgement statement, you may wish to learn the names of Indigenous tribes from your area at <https://native-land.ca>, or see additional suggestions at www.lspivg.org/knowtheland.

"We won't save a place we don't love; we won't love a place we don't know; and we can't know a place we haven't learned."
— *Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum's comments to the 1968 general assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature*

Land Acknowledgement Statement

As we gather today, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the _____ peoples. (Name the tribes on whose land you and your gathering space reside.) We remember that we share this land with _____, _____, and _____. (Name native animals and birds.)

Call to Worship

Leader: We have come to _____ seeking to worship the God of all Creation. (place of worship)

People: We have come to stand on holy ground!

Leader: We have come to sing God's praises as the _____ and the _____ sing God's praise with their blooming. (local spring flowers or budding trees)

People: We have come to sing praises to our Creator!

Leader: We have come to experience the mighty rush of the Spirit like the flowing waters of _____. (local river or body of water)

People: We have come to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit!

All: We have come to experience the God of Creation in this sacred space.

Prayer of Confession

Holy God,

We confess that for many of us the history of how we came to be here is more complex than we understand. We confess that we have lost our connection to our local habitat—to the names of the birds of the air, and the fish of the waters, and every crawling thing that you have created. We confess that we are a people who have lost our connection to the dirt under our feet. The very substance into which you breathed life. Transform us, O God, and give us roots.

Empower us to discover the history of this sacred place to which you have called us. Embolden us to reconcile with the children of God who called this place home and to honor their care for the land. Help us to learn the seasons of this sacred place—to learn the native flowers and trees, native birds and wildlife. Open our eyes to the seeds that have been sown here for millennia and the intentional care you have taken in crafting our habitat, so that we might be rooted and grounded in the family of God in our midst.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Statement of Assurance

There is nowhere that we can run to escape God's love and compassion. In the generous gift of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, we have been forgiven. As Children of God, we are invited into the meaningful work of following faithfully after Jesus here, in this place, Amen.

ACTION ITEMS

- Get to know the watershed in your region.
<https://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm>
- What rivers or bodies of water are close to your place of worship?
- Encourage your congregation to host a river or waterway clean-up day.
- Write to Congress in defense of the Antiquities Act of 1906.
- Build relationships with local community organizations that contribute to sense of place.
- Seek out cultural competency training.
- Read *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010) by Soong-Chan Rah.
- Are lands, waters, creatures, or peoples of your place in peril somehow?
- Send pictures of how your community creates a sense of place to Creation Justice Ministries.



PC(USA) CERTIFIED EARTH CARE CONGREGATIONS

A project of the Presbyterian Hunger Program

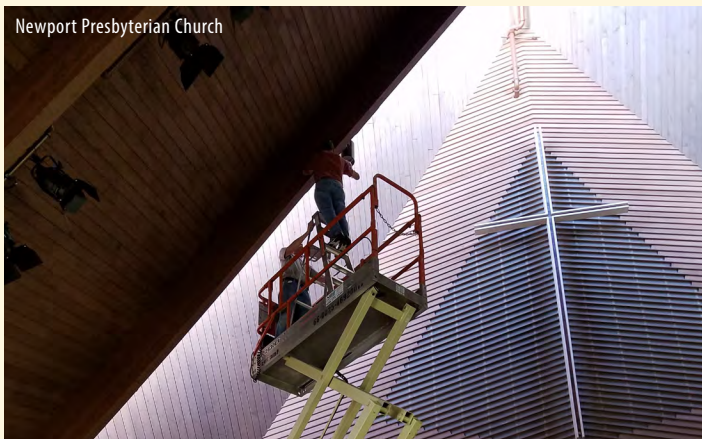
In spring 2018, the Presbyterian Hunger Program certified 206 Earth Care Congregations, including 27 churches with first year certificates and 20 churches with five years certificates!

The Presbyterian Church (USA) “Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice,” policy was approved by the 1990 General Assembly and reaffirmed by the 2010 General Assembly. The PC(USA) recognizes that restoring creation is not a short-term concern to be handled in a few years, but a continuing task to which the nation and the world must give attention and commitment.

In 2010, a dozen pilot PC(USA) congregations were certified as Earth Care Congregations. The goal of the program is to celebrate and inspire churches to care for God’s earth in a holistic way, through integrating earth care into all of church life.

THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN AND ALL WHO COME AFTER IS AT STAKE.

- The Call to Restore the Creation, 1990



FACILITIES: *Newport Presbyterian Church, Bellevue, WA.* The Green Team’s mission is to “weave creation-care into the fabric of Newport’s church life.” The ways in which their facilities factor into that is a source of pride for the congregation. They have a city-certified wetlands, a nature trail, a chapel in the woods, and a Mission Garden with an attractive wooden deer fence built as an Eagle Scout project. Their lawns have native plants and their preschool also has a barked play area. In addition to that, in 2017 their Property Committee also took on the “lofty” task of installing new LED lights in their sanctuary.

WORSHIP: *Central Presbyterian Church, Waxahachie, TX.* Susan Cravens with her German Shepherd, Allie, who is being blessed by Rev. Matt Curry during the church’s animal blessing. Allie passed away the next Saturday on due to kidney failure. Susan said, “I’ll always remember Matt’s service fondly. I was a basket case but it was very moving and touching for me to be surrounded by so much love and others who care for their animal partners as much as myself.”

TH CARE CONGREGATIONS



Maryland Presbyterian Church



First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth

OUTREACH: *Maryland Presbyterian Church, Towson, MD.* One of the first Earth Care Congregations, piloting the program in 2009 for certification in 2010. They have grown and deepened in their ministry and witness ever since, tackling storm water management, energy efficiency, creating a congregational covenant, educating area children, and more. For the outreach portion of their earth care ministry, members of the church participated in the 2017 Washington D.C. Climate March.

EDUCATION: *First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth, MI.* The Partners in Earth Care team worked with the children in the congregation's mid-week program, "The Bridge," to educate them on the importance of bees in the world. The children then planted flower bulbs in the church garden that will attract bees. This information was used to create a poster for the Earth Care bulletin board for the rest of the congregation to view.

HOW TO BECOME AN EARTH CARE CONGREGATION

The Earth Care Congregation certification recognizes in a tangible way the churches that make the commitment to take seriously God's charge to "till and keep" the garden. To learn more about the Earth Care Congregation Program, to download an application, or to view the complete list of churches please visit www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.

1. Get started by talking with others at your church, the pastor(s), and the session. Form an "Earth care team" or assign this function to a current committee, so there is a dedicated group to track earth care ministry.

2. Explore together Earth Care Congregation materials, including the certification application which has the church "audit" and Earth Care Pledge www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.

3. Take the Earth Care Pledge to integrate environmental practices and thinking into all facets of church life. Using the "audit" in the application, track your completed activities in the fields of:

- Facilities
- Worship
- Outreach
- Education

4. Submit the Earth Care Pledge and commitments to earth care between January 1—February 15, by email to jessica.maudlin@pcusa.org.

Serve. Guard. Protect.

Jessica Maudlin, Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns

The very first command addressed to humanity in the entire Bible is to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion . . .” (Gen 1:28).

It feels very authoritarian, right? No room for compassion, dignity, or respect. We see humankind displaying this type of dominion when it comes to pollution and extraction of the Earth’s most precious resources. But was this control, domination and power struggle what God had in mind for us when this beautiful Creation came into being?

In May of 2015 Pope Francis, addressed this question of dominion in his Papal Encyclical. He rejects the “dominion” theory that gives humankind total domination over creation. This dominion view, based on Genesis 1:28, was interpreted during the 19th century to promote the industrial revolution and its desire to use the earth as malleable clay that people could pound and shape into whatever they want. Pope Francis sees this interpretation as distorted.

Instead, Pope Francis reads further into the Creation story to Genesis 2:15 which finds God telling Adam to till and tend the garden of the world. “‘Tilling,’” writes Francis, “refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving.” God gave humanity a command and said to tend or keep the garden. The Hebrew word for ‘tend’ or ‘keep’ is ‘shamar,’ and it means more than just to keep it neat and tidy. The Hebrew word means to guard or to watch and protect.

In her book *Inhabiting Eden*, Patricia Tull addresses the other Hebrew word in this verse that’s very important. The word ‘work,’ or as some translations more accurately say, ‘to cultivate’ is from the Hebrew word ‘abad,’ meaning to serve.



Katie Willis Rhodes

Looking at it this way, Genesis 2:15 would better be read as: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to serve it and to guard and protect it.”

Serve. Guard. Protect.

Those words may bring echoes of many things for different people but as I read this the first time, I could not help but associate them with the work that I do as a Foster mom. In the last two years, I’ve had four newborns in my home. And in the last two years, I have sent four newborns on to the next phase of their journey.

I started to see some parallels between our shared call to protect and serve the earth and my own call to protect and serve these babies.

These babies do not belong to me. I do not have parental authority in a way that I might if they were my biological children. I will not be present for all the phases of their precious lives. I will not see what potential they achieve.

But in those moments, for those days I was responsible. Who and what they may

become was shaped by the love (or lack) that they found in my hands, in my home, and in my actions.

I could have tried to exert dominion over them. I could have used them to fill empty places in my own life. I could have tried to control every moment, every choice. But anyone familiar with parenting generally or the foster system specifically will know what a futile effort that would be.

In this sacred calling, there is no room for power. No room for ego. No room for control.

It is indeed much like our shared sacred calling to preserve and honor God’s very good Creation.

There is no space for dominion. No space to question how this calling will fulfill our own selfish purposes.

There is only space for ‘abad.’ Serve. Guard. Protect. We are stewards of the earth and will be required to account for how we’ve kept and tended what God has given us.

Mining Fails Communities in DR Congo

By Jean Marie Kabanga, *Joining Hands DR Congo*

The Platform of Civil Society Organizations working in the Mining Sector (POM), PHP's Joining Hands network in the DR Congo, initiated an advocacy campaign in 2013 to amend certain provisions of the 2002 mining code to contribute to the development of local communities impacted by mining activities and incorporate the monitoring of the legal obligations of mining companies. POM has also been mobilizing local communities impacted by mining to bring attention to their priority development needs.

In September and December of 2017, POM organized advocacy sessions with Parliamentarians and Senators to ensure that community development tools be incorporated into the revision of the mining code which is underway. The current draft, adopted by two chambers of the National Assembly, contains innovations proposed by POM and civil society organizations.

POM is mobilizing local communities in

the mining provinces of Haut-Katanga and Lualaba through capacity building workshops on mining governance, radio programs, forums and local advocacy. Local

communities are actively participating in the crafting of community development guidelines for the revision of the mining code.



Men sift cobalt at an artisanal mine in Lubumbashi, DR Congo.

Why care about the Farm Bill?

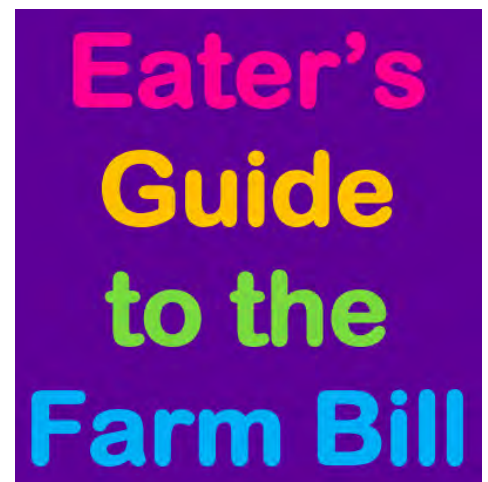
Because this one bill affects so many lives...

- One bill provides crop insurance to protect farmers hit by pests, drought, or flood.
- One bill supports communities as they develop their local and regional food systems.
- One bill provides research, credit, and support programs for farmers and ranchers.

Agriculture is one of the foremost contributors to pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change. One bill enacts either strong or weak creation care policies.

SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps, safety nets for children, the elderly, disabled people, and families struggling against poverty. One bill determines SNAP policies for the next five years.

Backed by PC(USA) policy and with the input of faith, food, and farm groups around the country, PHP has produced the Eater's Guide to the Farm Bill. It is a manual for equipping Presbyterians to raise their voices and includes questions to ask local, state, and federal candidates are included. Download at www.presbyterianmission.org/food-faith/farmbill.



Haiti: Land use and the environment

By Fabienne Jean, Coordinator for FONDAMA

Before it was colonized, the island of Haiti was inhabited by a people who depended mainly and traditionally on natural resources. These people lived and produced their food with methods that respected the “Pachamama,” a term meaning “Our mother, the earth.”

With the Treaty of Ryswick (1697), the island of about 29,418 square miles was split. The Dominican Republic, in the East, makes up about 64 percent of the territory, and the Republic of Haiti occupies the western third of the island. From its beginning, Haiti was essentially agricultural. Haiti was the most prosperous colony of France thanks to its plantations of coffee, cocoa, sugarcane and indigo, among so many goods.

Although considered one of the poorest countries, Haiti today is still one of the most coveted because of its many natural resources: its minerals, waterfalls, beaches and high-quality labor. All of this fuels the interest of multinationals to build industrial and agricultural-free zones, major tourist sites and other investments that take up a large geographic footprint.

As recently as 2012, major decisions were adopted to make the multinationals more profitable. Unfortunately a “green economy” strategy actually captured the planet’s natural resources, to eliminate peasant agriculture and replace it with industrial agriculture or agribusiness.

Peasant agriculture — or small stakeholder farming — uses practices and methods that respect the rights of the land, healthy food and the environment. It also respects the rights of current and future generations.

Meanwhile, the promoters of the so-called “green economy” thought they would solve the world’s hunger problems by modifying seed genes in the laboratory to yield more



Cindy Corell

Edouard Joel, a farmer in Torbeck, Haiti, shows the results of corn planted on a farm near his home. Joel and most of his neighbors lost their crops in Hurricane Matthew on Oct. 4, 2016. When Presbyterian Disaster Assistance partnered with FONDAMA, 5,000 families were able to replant gardens and community cornfields to recover and continue their lives and livelihoods. Unlike large plantations and agribusinesses, small stakeholder farms give families the opportunity to plant and harvest their own crops.

crops, producing chemical pesticides and fertilizer. Also, the production and processing of industrial foods is a main cause of climate change. In addition, the model of industrial agriculture has already grabbed a significant portion of land, water, and energy in order to produce food consumed on the planet.

We are concerned and for good reason, about the effects of industrial agriculture and greenhouse gas emissions; carbon dioxide and methane are harmful to our health, but also for our climate and the entire planet.

On the other hand, with the little land, water, and energy remaining, the peasants’ agriculture is producing the vast majority of products consumed on the planet — and helping cool the earth.

In its struggle for the safeguarding and protection of the land, the defense of

the environment and food sovereignty, FONDAMA’s mission is to bring together peasant organizations from all over the country to say no to land grabbing and climate injustice, and to fight for food sovereignty and to protect our land and our environment.

Thus, as it does every year with the support of its member and allied organizations, on the occasion of the World Earth Day, Fondama will organize a large conference including the press, the members of the government and the other actors to continue to challenge leaders and people of the planet to change their behavior. Our objective will be to contribute more to help cities and communities around the world accelerate the transition to a more sustainable future. We must help them understand how we are responsible for the planet and how our actions have a destructive or protective effect on it.

Puerto Rico: continued from page 1

this year. However, with guidance from members of Organización Boricuá, the brigades moved around the island, working a few days at a time at different sites. Using hand tools, they cleared fields of weeds and debris, dug composting outhouses, and dismantled ruined buildings. They also planted beans, cucumbers, peanuts, and tomatoes on farms that looked hopeless only a few weeks before. And morning and evening, brigade members gathered, formed a circle, and reiterated their commitment to the project, the earth, and each other's well-being.

At the heart of the current crisis in Puerto Rico is a lack of access to locally-produced, healthy food. While Puerto Rico has a long agricultural history, since colonial times, much of the land was used for cash crops like sugar. Following World War II, the U.S. built up industry in Puerto Rico, eventually leading to the collapse of the agricultural system. Today, 85 percent of Puerto Rico's food is imported. "Most of our food comes in through the Port of San Juan," says Jesús Vásquez, National Coordinator of Organización Boricuá. "For years, we've been saying 'if there's a natural disaster, we won't have any food.' And then it happened."

For Organización Boricuá, it is of high priority to establish food sovereignty in Puerto Rico. For Vásquez, this means that farmers and rural workers are the principle decision makers on where the food they grow will be sold, and what a fair price will be. Food sovereignty includes the concept of crop diversification—planting many types of crops, instead of just one or two. It promotes biodiversity, rejects agrochemicals, and protects the tree canopy. Vásquez believes that because of these practices, the organic farmers he works with weathered the storm better than most commercial growers. For example, the use of raised beds for planting prevented the heavy soil erosion many conventional growers experienced.

"But even with our good farming practices, our movement suffered. And although we have some resilience on the farms, we cannot deny that the impact of the hurricane was strong," said Vásquez. "So that's where we're at now—in a process of recuperation, reconstruction, and with a strong brigade of people from different organizations in different parts of the world. Organization-to-organization solidarity."

PHP in partnership with PDA and Presbyterians, including the presbytery camp El Guacio, are also exploring ways to support food justice and recovery in Puerto Rico.

Pope: continued from page 3

presidency with a declaration to restore the operations of the smelter towards the end of stimulating the economy, even if it meant weakening environmental protections which would put at further risk the health of the population.

Red Uniendo Manos Peru has been accompanying the affected population of La Oroya and surrounding areas for nearly twenty years, fighting for specialized health care, environmental protections, and industry and government accountability. And so, it was in the days leading up to the Pope's visit, our global partners returned to their spiritual roots (quite literally!) and spent time with a gathering of women leaders from La Oroya who have dedicated the past twenty years to planting trees on the hillside where they live in order to help remediate the soils and recuperate productivity of the land on which they depend.

As noted in our partners' letter to the Pope, "Indigenous peoples and communities do not want a way of life to be imposed upon them. They want to live harmoniously with nature which they feel they are part of." In fact, is this not merely what they want, rather what we all need?

To read about PC(USA) involvement with and policies on environmental justice and indigenous rights, see www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/standingrock.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:



April 22: Earth Day

May 3: National Day of Prayer

May 12: Fair Trade Day

September 1: World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

October 11 – 18: Food Week of Action

November 18: Hunger and Homelessness Sunday



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