

**“Serving God through Faithful Stewardship on Our Common Home*:
Equipping Good Shepherd United Methodist Church for the Anthropocene.”**

Rev. DaeHwa Park

Over the last two decades I have served as an ordained elder at several United Methodist churches in the greater Washington area. While leading these congregations, I learned that there was a need for a discipleship pathway for the churches I served to make and empower the disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In 2010, I wrote a 40-page ministry catalog, entitled *Means of Grace that Shapes Our Future*, for Saint James United Methodist Church in West Friendship, Maryland. The catalog was used mainly for new member classes and for the financial stewardship for the church.

Beginning with the mission, vision, value and beliefs of the church, the catalog helped a new disciple grow and find his or her place in the life of the church through the discipleship pathway. The discipleship pathway was developed through the Wesleyan means of grace. It offers eight assimilation tracks that bring up new members to grow to the level of spiritual leaders in the church. Each track requires a year of bible study and lay leadership practice in the area of ministry – worship, study, service and evangelism. Through the assimilation process of each track,** the members of the church learn the ministerial skills and are invited to serve eight different leadership areas of the church.

*In his recent encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis uses the term, referring it to earth.

The catalog has been revised at each pastoral appointment and used for the discipleship pathway for two other congregations: Lanham United Methodist Church, Lanham; and the UMC of Savage in Savage, Maryland. Following the pastoral appointment in July, 2019, it was revised again for Good Shepherd UMC (Good Shepherd) in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Good Shepherd is a relatively young congregation compared to other United Methodist churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, yet it is eager to transition into a church of new generations. Established in the early 50s, Good Shepherd has gathered a multi-ethnic congregation in the greater Washington area. Over the last two decades in particular, Good Shepherd received numerous immigrants primarily from West Africa, including English-speaking Asian-Americans. Then, Hispanic and Latino residents began to move into the parish and became the largest racial group. Recently, Good Shepherd has received several French speaking members.

**For the works of mercy and piety Good Shepherd has developed eight assimilation tracks: 1) Practical Divinity and Holiness Track; 2) Worship and Devotion Track; 3) Sunday School Teacher Track; 4) Small Group Leader Track; 5) Lay Leadership Track; 6) Service and Outreach Track; 7) Prayer and Care and Pastoral Visitation Track; 8) Witnessing and Evangelism Track. (DaeHwa Park, *Means of Grace that Shape Our Future*, 3rd edition, unpublished, 2019), 7, 26-29.


 Congregation Study

The demographic study of the church's parish reveals a unique combination of residents: "silver sophisticated," – a retired, highly educated elderly group, striving "Singles and Starters," – young professionals, and "Cultural Connection," – new immigrants.* With the demographic change, Good Shepherd launched a new ministry, called, multi-contextual ministry.

Cambridge Track D: "The Winds of the Spirit and Ministries for a Changing World" program helped me to learn that the discipleship pathway of the church needs to be modified in order to face new challenges from climate change and its related environmental crisis.

The DMin project will seek to modify the discipleship pathway of the church, with new theological underpinnings for the moral vision of the church for Anthropocene. The entire church will participate in the project with a questionnaire and a survey. A fieldwork journal will be kept throughout the year. As a project for congregational transition, a sermon series will be associated with the project. Seasonal devotionals and congregational acts, i.e. a Carbon Fast during Lent, will be revamped as the church explores new insights on creation care. During the project a new small group will be organized to lead the Action and Advocacy** track as an objective of the discipleship path-

*DaeHwa Park, "Finding "Good-Fearers" in Our Parish," *Love Notes*, Church Seasonal Newsletter, (January-February, 2019): 14-17. Used community demographics generated by InfoSeve.

Chapter One begins with an overview of on the global emergency in our common home, the earth, and the church's need to respond to the environmental crisis caused by climate change. The global emergency will include the human impact on the natural world with IPCC (Intergovernmental Panels of Climate Change) reports and the observations of several advocates, such as Bill McKibben, Amitav Ghosh, Jim Antal, and T.J. Corringe. But, the emergency will be found more in the people living in the secular age with disbelief and a lack of moral vision for God's creation. This would include Good Shepherd, which has not paid much attention to the action and advocacy needed for creation care.

A denominational research on the church's response to the global emergency will explore the collaborative act among the protestant churches and other faith traditions in the United States. The overview will help Good Shepherd engage questions around how the church can foster the interdependent acts of stewardship for the common good and built environment on the verge of Anthropocene.

Chapter Two articulates three major biblical texts that support new theological underpinnings for the church of Anthropocene. First, the Yahwist tradition of the Creation story (Genesis 2:4b-3:24) will emphasize the role of human beings in God's creation.

**Baltimore-Washington Conference started Act and Advocacy as one of new five areas of emphasis in the conference ministries since the 233rd Annual Conference in 2018. This project will serve as an implement of the new emphasis at Good Shepherd UMC, a UMC in the Greater Washington District.

Secondly, the Noaic Covenant on new creation (Genesis 8:22) will provide a broader theological horizon than Judeo-Christian orthodoxy derived from the Abraham tradition (Genesis 12:1-3). The vision of a New Heaven and a New Earth (Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-22:5) will be discussed as the vision of God's Kingdom for all humanity. Thirdly, The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6 and Luke 6) will examine an ecclesiastical locale for Anthropocene. The holy observance of Sabbath prescribed in the commandments and also in the Lord's Prayer - the two fundamental rituals of Judeo-Christian spirituality - will help the church acknowledge the gift of Sabbath and Jubilee, where and when the church prospers God's Kingdom vision.

Chapter Three helps Good Shepherd to create a ministerial curriculum to equip the church with an Act and Advocacy track that will make the discipleship pathway relevant to today's tasks of the church. The track will include reading assignments on the act of the Holy Spirit and the significance of the rituals in the process of being an emergent church. John Wesley, inspired by Jeremy Taylor, will arouse a Christian duty inspired by Holy Living. Karl Barth's work on the Holy Spirit will help the church discover their new identity as the "called and sent." *

*Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, paragraphs 71-72*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1962), 481-901.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer will facilitate the church move toward interdependence. The curriculum will include suggested readings on Jewish spirituality, especially from Abraham Joshua Heschel on *The Sabbath*; and Martin Buber's *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, which will foster the reciprocal collaboration of fellow creatures on creation care. The church will be invited to read indigenous wisdom and scientific knowledge through a few other references, such as Robin Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees*. Christian Ethicists, like Jim Antal, Stephen R. L. Clark and Larry L. Rasmussen will provide a roadmap of how to be a "climate church."**

The church will learn how give spiritual leadership to the church and community. With the new curriculum, the members of the church will learn how to write prayers, devotionals, and creedal statements for creation care.*** The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church will also be a reference.

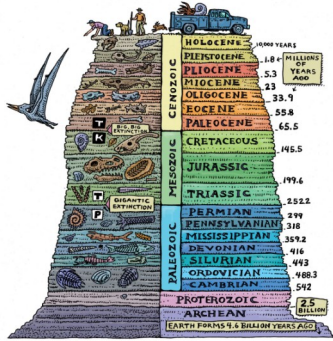
**Jim Antal, *Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

***Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying: With Prayers Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian* will be a guide for writing up prayers. Several other references on devotionals regarding creation care, such as *God's Good Earth: Praise and Prayers for Creation* by Anne and Jeffrey Rowthorn, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, by Pope Francis, and *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation* by Sam Hamilton-Poore will be examined for a congregational guideline for writing seasonal devotionals for Lent – the season that Good Shepherd uses for its Christian formation.

Congregational Study

Chapter Four contains a conclusion with findings from the project that examine about how Good Shepherd can foster the interdependent acts of stewardship for our common home. The project will explore how Good Shepherd can work with other faith-based communities in the local and global community, especially for the gathering of the faithful people who honor and sustain God’s creation.

Through the growing numbers of the culturally connected, immigrants in the community, the last chapter will pose a question about how Good Shepherd will embrace these new neighbors who might not have room for creation care because of their immediate need of settlement, and will empower them to become a part of “earth-honoring faith”^{*} body of Christ.



^{*}Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religions Ethics in a New Key* (Oxford, UK, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Friends,



I would like to invite you to join me in search of developing a discipleship pathway in conjunction with our ministry at the verge of Anthropocene, a new ecological epoch after Holocene. This is a part of the Doctor or Ministry Program offered by Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. and Wesley House, one of consortium of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Please set aside about half an hour and give your answer. Your participation helps me develop the discipleship path in the church. so that we Good Shepherd may call, equip and send the faithful stewards who will commit to preserve the planet earth—Our common home!

You may use the postcard enclosed here-with as an answer sheet, and mail it to me at Good Shepherd UMC at 9701 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD no later than September 1, 2021. Thank you very much.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. DaeHwa Par
 (202) 277-8553
 “The Winds of the Spirit and Ministries for a Changing World”
 Cambridge Track D
 Doctor of Ministry Program

A Congregational Questionnaire for a Quest for Creation Care

The world faces the environmental crisis with climate change. The discipleship pathway of Good Shepherd UMC (GSUMC), a suburban and multi-contextual congregation, has been focusing on a traditional mission of the church to make and empower the disciples of Jesus Christ, especially finding and keeping the un-churched. GSUMC is in need of modifying its ministerial strategy to call, equip and send the spiritual leaders for creation care as the primary task of the church at the verge of Anthropocene.

You are truly invited to this participatory work to create a congregational data, by this questionnaire and survey. By taking this survey, you will begin a hermeneutic approach for an emergent church that meets the spiritual needs of the day. The works of the advocates on creation care will guide a collaborative work of the church for environmental justice. The project will create a new assimilation track on Act and Advocacy, with a leadership training curriculum. It will revise church's ministry catalog, *Means of Grace that Shape our Future* (2019). Those who are willing to participate in an oral presentation, please let me know on the answer sheet (see the postcard enclosed here).



1. What would describe you best?

- ① A member or Regular Attendee of Good Shepherd UMC
- ② An associate member: Child of Good Shepherd
- ③ A former member or clergy
- ④ A Christian believer
- ⑤ A God-Fearer or seeker
- ⑥ An Atheists
- ⑦ Others (Please specify if you want: _____)

2. What age group do you belong?

- ① Age 12 and under
- ② Junior and Senior High School Age (13 – 18 years old)
- ③ Young Adults (19-35 years old) ④ Adults (36-64 years old)
- ⑤ Senior Adults (65 and older)

3a. Regarding the advent of Anthropocene,

- ① I never heard about it. ② I don't know it.
- ③ I am aware of it. ④ I don't believe it.
- ⑤ I don't think that it is true.

3b. What would be the most significant causes of the advent of Anthropocene?

- ① Industrial Revolution ② Human Pride and Abuse of Resources
- ③ Rapid increases of Human population
- ④ Deforestation ⑤ Emission of Carbon Dioxide
- ⑥ Part of Evolution of Universe ⑦ I don't know

Congregational Study

4. What is the attribute of God do you use most when you pray.
- ① Creator of Heaven and Earth; Author of Life
 - ② Almighty and Everlasting God
 - ③ God, Heavenly Father
 - ④ Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - ⑤ Lord (King of kings, etc.)
 - ⑥ God of Universe (Great Spirit, etc.)
 - ⑦ God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
5. What are the primary tasks of the church? Please write numbers as significance on the answer sheet.
- ① [] Offering Worship and Teaching for Personal holiness
 - ② [] Social Holiness for Peace and justice
 - ③ [] Evangelism: Bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to the unchristian.
 - ④ [] Outreach: Serving for the outcast and the poor
 - ⑤ [] Sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion) and Ecclesial Acts (Wedding, Funeral, etc.)
 - ⑥ [] Equipping Disciples for God's Kingdom and Righteousness incl. Children and Youth
 - ⑦ [] Advocacy for Political Action and Social Awareness
6. What would be the top priority of the ministry of the church?
- ① Proclamation & Witness
 - ② Fellowship & Member Care
 - ③ Service and Outreach
 - ④ Advocacy and Actions
 - ⑤ Sacraments and Ecclesial Acts (Weddings, Funerals, etc.)
 - ⑥ Searching the Scripture
 - ⑦ Prayer and Meditation
7. What would you be the best description of the Kingdom of God?
- ① Going and living in Heaven
 - ② Peace and justice for all
 - ③ Restoring the Planet Earth as God Created Good
 - ④ Christian Perfection
 - ⑤ World without Sins and Problems
 - ⑥ Make Human Society (Built Environment) Prosperous and Peaceful
 - ⑦ A Place and time where God is in charge



Congregational Questionnaire Cont'd

8. What have you done for Creation Care?

- ① Personal Prayer
- ② Read references related to Creation Care
- ③ Recycling
- ④ Improve automobiles and home with renewable energy facilities
- ⑤ Participated advocacy events
- ⑥ Academic or Scientific Research on Environmental Concerns
- ⑦ Join an advocacy event at least once within the pastor 5 years

9. Which scripture does it resonate to your concerns for Climate Change?

(answers all that apply)

- ① *"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."* (Genesis 8:22)
- ② *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."* (Exodus 20:8)
- ③ *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* (Isaiah 41:10)
- ④ *"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."* (Isaiah 65:17)
- ⑤ *"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10)
- ⑥ *He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."* (Matthew 17:20)
- ⑦ *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- ⑧ *"Behold, I am making everything new."* (Revelation 21:5)

10. In his book, *The Power of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Community*, Tom F. Driver talks about a variety of rituals that transform the lives of people. What do you think the primary roles of the church for Anthropocene?

Please share your preference in the answer sheet.

- ① Prayer
- ② Cooperate Worship
- ③ Searching of the Scripture
- ④ Evangelism and Witnessing
- ⑤ Political actions for Policymaking
- ⑥ Interdisciplinary Dialog with Scientist
- ⑦ Monetary Contribution to Research or Advocacy Events

Congregational Study

11. What is your expectation of the church on Creation Care?

- ① Preaching from the Pulpit
- ② Learning Opportunities from Scientists and Policymakers
- ③ Forming of Small Groups for Action and Advocacy
- ④ Art Exhibition
- ⑤ Music Concert to Public Awareness
- ⑥ Local Service Project (Recycling, etc.)
- ⑦ Others (Please specify):

12. How do you see Jesus Christ in conjunction with Christianity at the verge of Anthropocene? (answer all that apply)

- ① The Savior of the World
- ② The Great Teacher: The Word, The Truth, The Light of the World
- ③ The Lamb of God who Takes Away the Sins of the World
- ④ The Son of God
- ⑤ The Lord of lords and King of kings
- ⑥ The Great Priest who Reconcile All of Lives with God
- ⑦ The Healer and Sustainer
- ⑧ Cosmic Christ: The Lord of Universe
- ⑨ The Healer
- ⑩ The Advocate, The Counselor, the Helper

