

context

Jim Taylor is one of Canada's best known authors and editors among mainline churches. He was Managing Editor of The United Church Observer; a co-founder of Wood Lake Books, who published his book "Everyday Psalms".

For thousands of years the psalms have been a source of strength and comfort. Jim Taylor deliberately uses the past tense here because he is not convinced that the psalms provide that any more. Things have changed: the world is dramatically different than it was in ancient biblical times. He does not think the message of the psalms are irrelevant but he believes that the images and metaphors make little sense in today's world. When did you last have a personal encounter with a shepherd?

Psalms were about real life and so Jim Taylor encourages us to read both the biblical version and his paraphrases. He even goes further and encourages us to re-write the psalms from our own experience!

listen Psalm 104:24-25

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Here is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.

*You made everything God.
The oceans are the amniotic fluid of the earth,
in your womb we share our origins.*

In the seas of the ancient psalms, this week's indicator species, the salmon, would flourish. Salmon stocks are healthy when the waters are clean and filled with diverse life -- *sea teems with creatures innumerable*.

If both the fresh and salt water is healthy for salmon, that indicates that the surrounding habitats are healthy for other species, including ourselves. Imagine if the oceans were once again the amniotic fluid of the earth.

gift of music *Care for Creation*: Pepper Choplin CHOIR

reflect

Like salmon, frogs tell it like it is!

Frogs are cold-blooded which means that their bodies are the same temperature as the air or water around them. They make good indicator species because they live in two environments, land and water. If there are lots of frogs in a habitat, it means the ecosystem is healthy.

There is a myth about frogs which is not proven by science - put a frog in a pot of water, increase the temperature of the water gradually and the frog will remain unaware of the impending danger until it's too late. We're that frog!

Tom Rand uses this myth as metaphor in his book "Waking the Frog": which looks at the how societal factors immobilize us in the fight against climate change and how we can overcome them. While carbon dioxide emissions continue to pour into our atmosphere, driving climate change, our psychology and our market economy; keep us from "waking up" and taking action.

Tom Rand is a Canadian entrepreneur, active investor in green initiatives and MaRS advisor to clean-tech companies. MaRS Discovery District in Toronto is one of the world's largest urban innovation hubs. Its modest purpose is to help

innovators change the world! Tom really does “walk the talk.” He built Canada’s greenest hotel in downtown Toronto, demonstrating not only that clean technology is affordable, but that it can also generate generous returns on investment.

Even though we are already living with catastrophic climate destructions - as I was writing this I had just finished reading about flooding in Australia. Even though it might seem we are too late - - The future hasn’t already been decided. Changes can still be made - - IF WE ACT NOW!

In the fall of last year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report that sent shock waves to many folk- it warned of the “unprecedented” changes that will happen if the world continues to warm. That is indeed scary stuff and we should be scared but not the point of being immobilized, like that mythical frog.

Perhaps the most important statement in the IPCC report is that there is still a chance to seize the best-case scenario rather than surrender to the worst. From the Industrial Revolution to date, human activities have caused approximately 1°C of global warming. This warming will likely reach 1.5°C by 2030 if we continue as we are - - resulting in more powerful hurricanes, worsening drought, melting glaciers and rising sea levels. That means we have 12 years to change! We can do a lot in 12 years.

What has happened in the past 12 years? The environmental movement that has taken on pipelines and fuel trains, refineries and shipping terminals, fracking and mountaintop removal, divestment and finance, policy and law, and sometimes won! Some of what were regarded as climate activists’ wild ideas and unreasonable demands are now policy and conventional common sense.

Perhaps soon I will be able to get a tax receipt for my donations to Greenpeace. I have supported Greenpeace for decades and I knew they were making a difference when their charitable status was revoked!

So what else has changed in the past 12 years? There has been a revolution in energy generation that is as profound as the industrial revolution. Wind and solar engineering have changed everything; we now have the capacity to generate energy from renewable sources and leave fossil fuel behind. It was not possible then; it is now.

Astoundingly, 98% of the energy Costa Rica generates is from non-fossil fuel sources. Scotland closed its last coal-fired power plant two years ago and overall emissions there are half what they were in 1990. Portugal generated more energy from renewable sources than it needed in March 2018

Texas is getting more of its energy from wind than from coal. Iowa gets a third of its energy from wind because wind is already more cost-effective than fossil fuel. California committed to make its electricity 100% carbon-free by 2045. There are stories like this from all over the world that tell us a transition is already under way. They need to scale up and speed up, but we are not starting from scratch.

We need to shut down production of fossil fuels directly, with a just transition for workers in those sectors. Five countries – Belize, Ireland, New Zealand, France and Costa Rica – are already working on bans on new exploration and extraction. We have a lot to learn here in Canada from the example of these countries, as we continue production of the Albertan tar sands.

And listen to this -- -the World Bank announced in December 2017 that after 2019 it would no longer finance oil and gas extraction.

We can learn much about perseverance from the salmon and it's challenging journey upstream. Let us hear its story.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRe1ePS_hwg

As a species, humankind has a few waterfalls to jump. We need to accelerate research and development in what Tom Rand calls "The BIG 3" - - - carbon capture [trees do it best but there are other possibilities], enhanced geothermal [using the heat from the earth], next generation nuclear - 'breeder reactors' recycle the existing nuclear waste, turning it from a

problem to an energy source. The waste is burned numerous times and the end product breaks down in hundreds of years not hundreds of thousands. The design of breeders means that they don't need active cooling and cannot meltdown.

Research and development are crucial to augment the energy generated from current renewable sources [wind, wave, sun]. R&D is a risky business and one we have shied away from in recent decades - to our great disadvantage. Those who pioneer new ventures and those who back these ideas initially have the most to lose financially. Those who sit and wait to see which ideas take off have the most to gain financially.

But we don't have time to sit and wait! Tom Rand suggests public/private sector partnerships - let's build a dozen commercial scale plants for each of the big 3 and see which ones work and are profitable. Too much money? Not so, even if each plant cost \$1billion, that is peanuts compared to the \$250 billion energy subsidies that are handed out to the fossil fuel sector every single year.

The Year of the Flood by Margaret Atwood explores the unhealthy, toxic relationship between humans, animals, and the environment, published in 2009. The passing of time has made her work seem ever more eerily prophetic. The flood in this novel is not a watery one, but a global pandemic triggered as part of the same rapacious greed that is causing sea levels to rise.

Among the characters are "God's Gardeners", a religious sect dedicated to preserving the besieged natural world. God's Gardeners follow a pacifist, ecological approach to the Christian Bible. They have long awaited the Waterless Flood, and see the pandemic as this flood.

Atwood with her usual acuity, shows us where the belief that God brings down calamities on human-kind as punishment for wrong doing, takes us. It means we wait passively for divine wrath to wash away all but the chosen few. *"Human understanding is fallible, and we see through a glass, darkly. Any religion is a shadow of God. But the shadows of God are not God."*

Let's not wait for the flood. Let us act on the belief that there is a presence beyond our knowing, that is active in the world; birthing, evolving, loving. Let us act as if *The oceans [can still be] the amniotic fluid of the earth, God's womb in which we share our origins.* Let us be gardeners who believe that all things are wise and wonderful. Let us as homo sapiens, become as bright and beautiful as other creatures, both great and small.