

Exodus from Fossil Fuels: Interfaith Witness for Climate Action March 26, 2018

Fred *leads the people in song: Bright Morning Stars*

Welcome

Katy: Welcome to “Let My People Go: Exodus from Fossil Fuels!” I’d like to introduce the Steering Team for this project: the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman, the Rev. Dr. Lawrence Jay, Kristina Keefe-Perry, the Rev. Dr. Ian Mevorach, and I am Rabbi Katy Allen. The Rev. Fred Small is our song leader, and Rabbi Judy Kummer will be joining in worship leadership.

I’d like to recognize and thank the legislators or their aides who have joined us today: Rep. Sean Garballey, Rep. Denise Provost, Rep. Frank Smizik, (anyone else?) and others who couldn’t be here, but who are doing good work for climate justice inside the State House. We’d also like to recognize climate advocates here who are running for office. If any of you are here, please raise your hand high! [*Pause.*] We’d like to thank the many people who helped organize this event: please raise your hand high! Special thanks to the Rev. Betsy Sowers for helping to pull this service together. We’d also like to thank all our organizational partners, including Mass Power Forward, 350MA for a Better Future, Climate Disobedience Center, and Resist the Pipeline, and our many sponsors -- faith groups and environmental organizations -- and all of you, who have joined us here today from nearby and far away, including a delegation from the New England Peace Pagoda. Welcome!

Ian: We are gathered here as people of faith to call on Governor Baker to take bold and determined action by issuing an executive order halting new fossil fuel infrastructure, and to call on our legislators to pass critical clean energy and environmental justice legislation. At the end of the service, we invite you to join our mission to the Statehouse to lobby our legislators and to tell our Governor that now is the time to quit dirty energy, for the sake of all that we hold dear.

Lawrence: We are also building a cohort of bold and faith-filled activists to resist new fossil fuel construction. This morning we offered a training in nonviolent civil disobedience, and more trainings will follow. Action will begin soon at the new Back Bay pipeline, led by the group "Resist the Pipeline." Other actions to protest fossil fuels continue across the Commonwealth, from the Berkshires to Cape Cod. Today we gather in solidarity with these efforts, and we bless the courage and commitment of the people who are carrying them out.

Margaret: Finally, we are here to thank 13 amazing individuals who were among the nearly 200 who heeded the call to bold and determined climate action, and who blockaded construction on the West Roxbury Lateral high-pressure fracked gas pipeline. Their trial was scheduled to begin tomorrow in West Roxbury District Court, but at the last moment, charges were reduced, eliminating the need for a jury trial. They, and their supporters at the Climate Disobedience Center, had been excited to present a necessity defense - to make the case that because the climate crisis is an emergency, emergency measures - even if they break existing law - are justified in order to prevent a greater harm. They are disappointed not to be allowed to present

their case after so many months of preparation. Today we honor and bless their courage and commitment, as well as that of the organizers and lawyers who have supported them

Call to Worship

Kristina: I invite you to join me in a spirit of prayer... May we listen for the ancient song of creation and recognize within that music our individual tunes. May we share the melodies and dissonances of our human condition, our grief, our longing, our joys. May we join our varied voices: some warbling, some bellowing, but all singing the same song: God's Creation is Good! Our song is our ode to that powerful Mystery in and around us. Let us join our hearts and voices in worship.

Fred leads the people in song: Come Go with Me to that Land

Verses: There'll be justice in that land. . . Ain't no fracking in that land. . . There'll be windmills in that land . . . There'll be solar in that land . . .

Margaret: In THIS land, our religious traditions acknowledge the sacredness of our planet, but we worry that its future is bleak. As people of many faiths, and looking around us today, we have HOPE, not fear. Today you give me HOPE. Today and every day, our faith and our hope give us a clear spiritual and moral obligation. We are called to protect the web of life. We are called as partners with scientists, and with God, to be stewards of creation, not rulers of creation. We are committed to building a just and sustainable society in which human beings, and all our other-than-human kin, can survive and thrive. We are acutely aware of our moral obligation to people on the margins, to front-line communities, to our children, and to generations yet to come.

Ian: In a letter dated February 24th and signed by 19 leaders from faith communities across the Commonwealth, we asked Gov. Baker for a meeting to hear our deep concern for the future of our Commonwealth, our Earth, and its future. We asked to speak with him about the moral necessity of ending permits for new fossil fuel projects. He has not responded, and has just introduced a new bill that could enable the return of the pipeline tax, and possibly allow fracked gas to count as "clean energy." So we are here today on his doorstep.

We are not here as powerless subjects to supplicate the Governor to do the right thing. We are here as citizens to whom he is accountable. We are here to tell him to do his part to prevent climate catastrophe while it is still possible. . . and to let him know that whether or not he joins us, *we* intend to build a cleaner, more just future: a future that does not rely on an addiction to Fossil Fuels.

Katy: In addition to being citizens, we are here as people of faith, and faith leaders, on a week when Jews will reenact the drama of Moses standing before Pharaoh on behalf of his people, proclaiming, "Let my people go!" Together, we invoke the Holy Power that liberates enslaved people and sets them on an Exodus journey toward a land of promise. We ask Governor Baker not to harden his heart as Pharaoh did, but to join us on our journey to a sustainable future.

Lawrence: We are here on a week when, on Palm Sunday, Christians reenact the drama of Jesus entering Jerusalem and the crowds welcoming him by placing palm fronds on the road. (*Raise palms*) In ancient times, Roman forces marched into Jerusalem every Passover to discourage political unrest among an occupied people, and Jesus' counter-procession expressed humble and powerful resistance. Just as Jesus faced down the power of Rome, and Moses faced

down the power of Egypt, we stand in fierce love and courage to confront the corporate and political powers that keep us dependent on fossil fuels.

Margaret: Whether we identify ourselves as Jews or Christians, Buddhists or Muslims, as members of other faiths, or simply as people of spirit and good will, we are here to proclaim that we are grounded in a power greater than the powers of death and destruction. We are grounded in our connection to earth, our connection to life, our connection to one another, and our connection to the Power that brought, and is bringing, everything into being, a holy Power that some of us call God.

Moses lifted his staff, calling on God to part the Red Sea, which allowed the people to cross safely. Our God-given calling is to part the sea of complacency and to walk the path toward 100% clean energy. When I say “Part the sea of complacency,” you say “Walk the path to clean energy!”

Crowd Chant (3 times)

Part the sea of complacency!

Walk the path to clean energy!

Ian: We call upon Gov. Baker to oppose the construction of all new fossil fuel infrastructure, and to move us quickly toward 100% renewable energy in a way that provides jobs and healthier living for all the residents of Massachusetts. Gov. Baker, join us in building a healthy future and a just Commonwealth in which all life may flourish.

Crowd Chant (3 times):

Part the sea of complacency!

Walk the path to clean energy!

Kristina: We call upon our legislature to pass the omnibus energy bill, providing jobs and access to clean energy to people of all economic levels in our Commonwealth.

Crowd Chant (3 times)

Part the sea of complacency!

Walk the path to clean energy!

Fred leads the people in song: Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around

Verses: Ain't gonna let injustice . . . complacency . . . no pipeline . . . business as usual...

The Plagues and Public Mourning

Judy: In the story of the Exodus, the Egyptians suffered terrible plagues. Today we too suffer plagues, rained down on our communities by forces we are working to counter. These contemporary plagues are different from the plagues of Egypt but they are no less dire. As we call them out, we invite you to call them out after us in response.

Katy: Injustice (*pause for response*)

There is deep racial and economic injustice in siting dangerous projects near Environmental Justice Communities, and in choosing projects such as 1 Dalton St., instead of investing in clean energy that is accessible to people of all income levels. (*pause*)

Judy: Vulnerability (*pause for response*)

Climate change affects low-income individuals and communities first and worst, the very communities that are least responsible for causing climate disruption and those most vulnerable to its effects. *(pause)*

Katy: Danger *(pause for response)*

Extracting and burning fossil fuels endangers public health and safety all along the way: at the place of extraction, along transportation routes, and at the point of burning. *(pause)*

Judy: Mass extinctions *(pause)*

Katy: Floods *(pause)*

Judy: Fires *(pause)*

Katy: Droughts *(pause)*

Judy: Death of the future *(pause)*

Public Mourning

Judy: In Judaism, it is traditional to tear our clothing in grief when we learn of the death of a loved one. In modern times, we tear a black ribbon worn over the heart to symbolize that our hearts are broken. We invite you now to take hold of a strip of black fabric and together we will tear these symbolic cloths to express our grief over the many losses that can never be healed. We'll follow the tearing with a moment of silence.

Vision for the Future

Margaret: Even as we mourn the Great Unraveling of our world, we see signs of the Great Turning. Like the hope-filled stories of Exodus and Easter, we affirm that death does not have the last word. We will hold lawmakers accountable for reducing carbon emissions. We celebrate being a part of a lifesaving, multi-faith, worldwide justice movement that includes growing numbers of youth, students and young adults. We celebrate the valiant work of people in frontline communities who stand in the way of death-dealing fossil fuel projects, embodying a vision for a just and sustainable future. We celebrate the thirteen individuals who were preparing to mount a “necessity defense” tomorrow in the West Roxbury District courthouse, for their commitment to a justice that is higher than human laws.

As we name each frontline group, we invite any of you who are here from that group to please step forward, and stay up front until all of our frontline groups are gathered, so that we may recognize and bless you all. Our shared blessing will be, **“We thank you! We bless you! We support you!”**

Katy: I invite anyone from the **Sugar Shack Alliance and any others fighting projects in Western Massachusetts** to come forward *(pause)*. Vivienne Simon from Sugar Shack has sent this greeting to share with you.

“Greetings from Vivienne Simon of the Sugar Shack Alliance in Western Mass, where we have been fighting pipelines for the last few years. Across this region people, communities and local governments joined together in a massive stand against the Northeast Energy Direct pipeline (the NED) that was proposed to run through private farms, private lands, and constitutionally-protected public lands. **AND WE WON!** The pipeline application was withdrawn, showing that **IT CAN BE DONE!** Bye bye NED, great to see you go!

We then turned our attention to fighting a proposed 3rd pipeline in Otis State Forest in Sandisfield, another public, constitutionally-protected land. We successfully stalled that project for a year. After a series of legal and regulatory fights failed to stop it, we spent 6 months in the Otis State Forest engaged in non-violent direct actions. A group of Water Protectors from Standing Rock joined us and together there were over 100 arrests and excellent, continuous media coverage.

In the end, with one exception, all charges were either dropped or converted to civil charges. One criminal charge remains against a Water Protector, Jake Renner, who, unprovoked, was assaulted and tased by the state police, and then HE was charged with assaulting a police officer! Jake refused to plead guilty to something he didn't do and turned down the state's plea deal, and he will be going to trial and putting the issues of climate emergency, police acting as a private arresting force for the pipeline companies, and the protection of our public lands, at the center of his trial.

We are now starting a new campaign against a group of recently-proposed pipelines in Agawam, West Springfield, Longmeadow and Springfield. Northampton -- which has been under a moratorium by Columbia gas company in their effort to blackmail the region into agreeing to the NED pipeline -- is being used to legitimize these pipelines in other towns and environmental justice communities. The gas company is claiming that the only way to lift the moratorium on us is to construct pipeline expansions somewhere else.

However, our local government has resolved to move to 100% clean energy so we are saying NO to being the excuse for these new pipelines and have set ourselves the task of leading the state by making Northampton the first city in Massachusetts to fully convert to clean energy! It's an ambitious and exciting campaign, and we fully expect to succeed!

We stand with everyone across Massachusetts who is fighting for a healthy, livable planet for all future generations of life on Earth, and we look forward to working together with you. We came to get arrested in W Roxbury to help stop the pipeline there, and you can expect to see us join with you on the front lines of your fight here in Boston as well.

We urge Governor Baker, and all our leaders across the state -- governmental, civic, religious, and otherwise -- to unite with us to create the green, clean, sustainable, just world that we are poised and ready to build.

Let's end the fossil fuel age across all of Massachusetts and prove that it can be done!"

Katy: For all those doing frontline work in Western Mass., join me in saying together: **We thank you! We bless you! We support you!**

Lawrence: I invite those from **Central and Southern Mass. Groups** facing the many tentacles of the proposed Access Northeast project. These include **No pipeline in Grafton, Sustainable Shrewsbury, Citizens Against the Rehoboth Compressor Station, No Sharon Gas Pipeline, 350MA chapters in Franklin and Medway, South Coast Neighbors United . . . any others we missed?** **Wendy Morrill Graça** sent this statement:

“Members of South Coast Neighbors United regret that we could not be with you today, but want to share the following words to express our solidarity and unity with you in facilitating and accelerating the exodus from dirty fossil fuels:

South Coast Neighbors United is a group of concerned citizens, formed in November 2015 in opposition to Access Northeast, a project proposed by Spectra Energy (now Canadian-based Enbridge) to expand natural gas infrastructure exponentially and unnecessarily across the state, impacting 23 towns. If approved, the portion which would affect our community would result in the construction of approximately 3 miles of high-pressured 24 inch pipeline through residential properties in Freetown to transmit fracked gas from the Marcellus Shale to a newly built liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage facility in the town of Acushnet. While there are already 2 existing LNG tanks in Acushnet, their current function is only to store the LNG. The proposed facility would entail processing equipment, to compress the fracked gas into LNG to be stored in the two new tanks, which would hold a combined 6.8 billion cubic feet of LNG. The existing tanks currently hold .5 bcf. To put the size of the new tanks into perspective, each tank would be BIGGER than the tank everyone has seen in Boston with the rainbow swash. This new facility would have venting flares, blowdowns and toxic emissions as part of its regular operations, and would be located in a residential neighborhood, next to many homes and within a mile and a half of 3 schools, child care and health care facilities.

Fortunately the Access Northeast has been put on temporary hold, but our work most certainly has not. This project, and many others, remains a very real threat to us all. Therefore South Coast Neighbors United remains committed in our dedication to the renewable energy revolution. In the course of fighting this project, we have learned of the risks and dangers our dependence and use of fossil fuels pose to our environment, health and future generations. To leave this world a better place than we found and made it, we must push our decision-makers to make stronger, better decisions and laws, with positive long-term goals and a bigger, brighter picture in mind. We cannot allow or enable the "profit over people" mindset and practice to continue. We stand with you, our allies, in spirit, support and determination, in working toward achieving this goal. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication in this endeavor!”

Lawrence: For all those doing frontline work against ANE in Central and Southern Mass., we say together: **We thank you! We bless you! We support you!**

Kristina: I invite members of **Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station** (FRRACS); **Families Against Enbridge, Hingham Residents Against the Compressor Station**, and any others fighting the Atlantic Bridge pipeline and compressor station in Weymouth. Alice Arena from FRRACS will speak on their behalf.

Alice:

Kristina: Thank you, Alice. For all those doing frontline work in the Fore River Basin, we say together: **We thank you! We bless you! We support you!**

Now I invite those from 350 Mass. Cape Cod to come forward. Lisa Coedy will share with us about what they are fighting.

Lisa: 350 MA Cape Cod is fighting for a fair and just clean energy transition, and are currently supporting offshore wind development in Cape waters, as well as state and local legislation, including carbon pricing and the omnibus bill, that will accelerate this end goal.

At present, we are fighting against the development of a new gas fired turbine, called Canal 3, at the Canal Generating Plant in Sandwich, the possibility of offshore drilling and government officials who have yet to see the urgency of avoiding runaway climate change.

What we need blessed and encouraged is the acceleration of a global consciousness of the importance to take care of the natural world of this planet before it's too late.

Kristina: Thank you, Lisa. For all those doing frontline work on Cape Cod, **We thank you! We bless you! We Support you!**

Ian: Now we turn to groups from metropolitan **Boston:** I invite any affiliated with **The Green Justice Coalition** to step forward. The Green Justice Coalition wasn't able to send a speaker today, but here's a little bit about their work.

“The Green Justice Coalition is on the front line of advocacy for environmental justice. Launched in Boston in 2008 as a grassroots network of organizations in low income and communities of color, they have won subsidies and outreach programs that make home weatherization affordable and accessible; increased wages and job standards for weatherization workers. Last year, they were part of the successful effort to get Boston City Council to vote for Community Choice Energy, increasing clean energy in the city without raising prices. Currently, they are working to pass H.3396/S.1831, An Act Relative to Solar Power Equity in Low Income and Environmental Justice Communities, which would make solar incentives available to renters and low to moderate income homeowners, and of course, the Environmental Justice bill.”

For the work of the Green Justice Coalition, join me in saying, **We thank you! We bless you! We support you!**

Ian: I invite any who are here from **Stop Back Bay Pipeline** to step forward. The Rev. Rob Mark (Senior Pastor, Church of the Covenant, Boston) is here to speak on their behalf.

Rob:

Ian: Thank you, Rob. For those doing frontline work in the Back Bay, we say together, **We thank you! We bless you! We support you!**

Margaret: I invite forward those from **Stop the West Roxbury Lateral** and other groups involved in the ongoing work in W. Roxbury; any of you who participated in the campaign of actions there; and those facing charges tomorrow in court, if any are here today... The Rev. Anne Bancroft (Minister, Theodore Parker Unitarian Universalist Church, West Roxbury) will speak on their behalf.

Anne: Love calls us to this fight on behalf of the earth and all its creatures.

I want to thank the hundreds of people who had the moral integrity to fight an unprecedented and dangerous pipeline through neighborhoods in West Roxbury and beyond.

I want to apologize to the people in Pennsylvania whose homes and families are at risk due to the fracking of gas that feeds the pipelines we failed to stop.

I want to remind our leadership – those who represent us in city and state government, our mayor and our governor – that we are counting on THEIR moral integrity to stop the continued expansion of fossil fuels. I want to encourage their moral IMAGINATIONS to develop a city and state that look forward, not back.

Lastly, I want to thank the defendants and attorneys who worked so hard to bring this issue to the public eye, whose trial would have been this week. Their efforts were thwarted, but our resolve is strong.

The West Roxbury Lateral Pipeline – for many of us – was the beginning of a fight. But it is not the end!

Margaret: Thank you, Anne. For all those doing frontline work in West Roxbury, and especially for those who had hoped to go to trial tomorrow, their lawyers, and organizers from Climate Disobedience Center, we say together, **We thank you! We bless you! We support you!**

Closing Blessing

Margaret: We have so much for which to give thanks! As we reach the end of this service, I invite us to gather ourselves as we prepare to give and receive a final blessing.

We've shared a lot of words, so, before we pray, I invite us to take a moment in silence to feel the good earth that supports our feet, which we bless with every step and which blesses us with every step... I invite us to take a good deep breath of air, giving thanks for the trees and green things, giving us oxygen...and to feel that warm sun with all its good energy, with which we can power so many things...

I invite you to join me in a spirit of prayer as we turn to our Creator, the Higher Power, the holy Mystery, the Great Spirit whom we know by many names:

God of abundance, we stand before you with grateful hearts, thankful for the gift of life, thankful for this beautiful world that you entrusted to our care. Thank you for sending into our midst these warriors and prophets who are giving themselves to the struggle to preserve a habitable world! We ask you to bless them and protect them. Give them courage when they are afraid, strength when they falter, and comfort when they grieve. Sustain them with your bountiful Spirit and guide them on their sacred path.

We ask your blessing on every one of us here. Thank you for the love that drew us here today, for the love that wells up from the center of our being, abides in our midst, and reaches out in every direction, calling us to recognize each other, and all other beings, as kin. Help us to bear witness to that love in everything we say and do.

We ask you to bless our Governor, our legislators, our political leaders, and all in authority, to turn their hearts and to guide them to make wise decisions that serve the common good.

And we ask you to bless our efforts going forward. Make us bold and humble, fierce and tender in our search for justice, healing, and peace. *Amen.*

Fred *leads the people in song:* The Tide Is Rising

Transition from Worship to Visiting Governor's Office & Lobbying

Ian: We are building a movement, an interfaith movement seeking peace and justice, etc., restoring our climate for future generations. Please provide your contact information on one of the sign-up sheets that are circulating.

Margaret: Here's what going to happen now: a small delegation of faith leaders, all of whom signed the letter to Governor Baker, are going to head to the Governor's office to renew our call that he become a true climate leader. The delegation includes Rabbi Katy Allen, Rev. Lawrence Jay, Rev. Betsy Sowers, and the two of us, Margaret Bullitt-Jonas and Ian Mevorach.

Ian: Our little band is speaking not just for ourselves, but also for all of us, for everyone who cares about climate. So we invite everyone to follow us and to come with us to the Governor's office. I have here a stack of blank postcards. I invite everyone who comes with us to the Governor's office to take a postcard. When you get there, let's all pile into his office -- and if they don't let us into his office, let's gather in front of his door -- and take a moment to write a postcard about why we care about climate.

Margaret: If you wonder what your postcard can say, we've offered some ideas on the handout you received. Your message can be short and sweet -- something as simple as "Gas is not a climate solution." And please sign your name and hometown!

While the postcards are going around, I invite you to take another look at your handout. If you don't have one, there are more (*point to where they are*). You'll see that we've chosen two bills that deserve support -- a Senate bill (the Omnibus Clean Energy Bill), and a House bill (the Environmental Justice Act). After we've all headed as a group to the Governor's office to write a postcard, we invite each of you, as individuals, to stop by the office of your state senator and state rep, and ask them to support the relevant bill. Make sense?

Finally, please consider heading to West Roxbury District Courthouse tomorrow to support the West Roxbury Resisters, as they go to have their cases resolved, *and* to the Jamaica Plain Forum on Wednesday evening at 7:00, when they will share their stories. Information about these opportunities is also on our handout.

We've done some powerful praying -- now it's time to pray with our feet. Our friends from the New England Peace Pagoda will lead the way with their drums. Let's walk in a spirit of prayer, and embody the faith that we profess. As they say in some churches: The worship is over. The service has begun.

(Monks from the New England Peace Pagoda lead the way to the entry doors of the Statehouse, drumming and chanting, followed by the delegation of faith leaders and by the congregation.)

Worship Leaders

Rabbi Katy Z. Allen, President, Jewish Climate Action Network

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Missioner for Creation Care, Episcopal Diocese of
Western Massachusetts & Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ

The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Jay, Executive Director, Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center of
the New England United Methodist Conference

Kristina Keefe-Perry, Coordinator, Creation Care Ministries, The American Baptist Churches of
Massachusetts

Rabbi Judith Kummer, Executive Director, Jewish Chaplaincy Council of Massachusetts

The Rev. Ian Mevorach, Spiritual Leader, Common Street Spiritual Center in Natick;

Coordinator, American Baptist Churches Creation Justice Network

The Rev. Fred Small, Minister for Climate Justice, Arlington Street Church, Boston

The Rev. Betsy Sowers, Minister for Earth Justice, Old Cambridge Baptist Church