Michigan Interfaith Power & Light
connecting faith, sustainability, and justice

+ Founded as a religious response to global warming

+ 300+ member congregations across MI from 30+ traditions and denominations

MI clergy at multi-faith gathering at Line 3 resistance, northern MN, June 2021
Leah Wiste (she/her)
Executive Director
Michigan Interfaith Power & Light

Working on climate action at Michigan IPL since 2013

• Based in Detroit
• recoverying Catholic!
“What can I do?”
What I’ll offer:

“Climate action wayfinding”

Top 10 tips and tricks for green living
“The world was created for me”

“I am but dust and ashes”
Two Pockets:

“Individual actions matter”

“The sum of our individual actions is not going to end climate chaos”
“The most important thing you can do, is join with your neighbors and organize. The second most important thing you can do, is join with your neighbors and organize. We need you to organize.”

–Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org and Third Act
living our values feels good and feeds our spirit.

“action is an antidote to despair”
Idea #1:

Building on individual action with the 3-Legged Stool
The 3-legged stool of Climate Action:

- Practical/local
- Spiritual/relational
- Social/systemic
Example:
Creating a rain garden
(a “could do,” not a “should do”)

(stool illustration)
Practical/local action:

- You create a rain garden with 12 native plants
- It diverts stormwater, lessening the burden on sewer system during storms
- It supports pollinators, endangered by habitat loss (lawns, development, etc.), pesticide use, and climate change
Spiritual/Relational Action:

- You celebrate the garden with friends
- The beautiful, low-maintenance, stormwater-managing, butterfly-and-bird-attracting garden sparks the interest of people around you, and you help them establish their own (source plants, design, etc.)
- You enjoy the garden as a place for morning coffee, connecting with nature, and meditation
- You learn about the medicinal properties of some of the plants
- You read *Braiding Sweetgrass* and begin to relate to the more-than-human world in a different way!
Social/Systemic Action

- You register your garden as a Certified Pollinator Habitat and add a sign that helps people learn more — your neighbors follow your lead!
- You work with your HOA/city to modify ordinances that privilege lawns. You prompt them to ban the use of pesticides!
- You host a screening and discussion of a film like *The Pollinators* to get people talking about the crucial role bees play in our food supply chain/to broaden the conversation to larger systems issues.
- Educate local officials about how the garden reduces stormwater runoff and helps pollinators
- Grow awareness by seeking media attention/writing an Op Ed
Idea #2: Make it irresistible
Toni Cade Bambara, 1939-1995, documentary filmmaker, activist, professor
scolding
Don’t:

• Litter
• Eat meat
• Use single use plastics
• Drive a Hummer
• *blah blah blah blah*
Idea #3:

Look for opportunities to invite people in.
A always
B be
C

connecting!
Idea #4: Climate Venn Diagram as a tool for discernment
from Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson
What needs doing in Ann Arbor?

- Utility municipalization/public power
- Directing resources to those who are harmed first and worst by pollution and climate impacts
- Divesting from fossil fuels (personal, institutional investments)
- Resource: [Just Transition Framework](#)
Idea #5:

Cultivate imagination, tolerance for uncertainty, ability to experience grief
Apathy is a form of the inability to feel grief. — Dorothee Sölle, German Christian theologian, 1929-2003
Community, Spirituality are also sources of support
Recap

Individual actions matter AND they aren’t enough

1. 3-legged stool to extend individual action
2. Make it irresistible
3. Invite others in
4. Climate Venn Diagram to discern where to start
5. Build emotional muscles
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