

Say What? | G-5 Climate Emergency – Fossil Fuel Reduction | Part 1

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Climate emergency, fossil fuel reduction, Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center, climate change, biodiversity loss, renewable energy, climate justice, human suffering, climate refugees, Paris Climate Accords, sacredness of creation, spiritual transformation.

SPEAKERS

Laurie Gordon, Paul Bethel, Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam, Kassie Ripsam

Blake Smith 00:29

Hey, this is Blake Smith, Project Manager for Project Zion Podcast. This episode of Say What is part one of a conversation between hosts Kassie Ripsam and Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam and their guests, Paul Bethel and Laurie Gordon. It's part of a larger series of episodes in which Kassie and Mary Anne interview the authors of the proposed legislation for the 2025 World Conference. Again, this is part one of a two-part conversation regarding G-5: Climate Emergency - Fossil Fuel Reduction submitted by the Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center.

Kassie Ripsam 01:07

Hello and welcome to Project Zion Podcast. I'm Kassie...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 01:11

and I'm Mary Anne,

Kassie Ripsam 01:12

and today we're interviewing Miss Laurie G. and Mr. Paul Bethel about the G-5 resolution, and first we have a few getting to know you questions, and once again, thank you for being here.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 01:29

So yeah, welcome.

Paul Bethel 01:32

Thank you.

Kassie Ripsam 01:34

Do you guys think you would survive a zombie apocalypse?

Paul Bethel 01:40

No, I prefer to sacrifice myself to make room for somebody younger that has a chance

Kassie Ripsam 01:49

Interesting answer. Miss Laurie,

Laurie Gordon 01:53

Well, so what I really want to say is I want to ask the question, Am I going to survive the current zombie apocalypse, because we're living in a time that feels apocalyptic in the traditional sense. But Apocalypse actually means Revelation. I'm going to nerd out a little bit here. It means seeing the revealing of hidden patterns, and we're seeing that a lot, and we're seeing that a lot with, oh, just this place of living as if we're dead, as if we're not awake. And so here we are in this place where being awake, which is something we've been asked to do, to really look and see the world and be willing to gaze at suffering and injustice, is more of a political weapon than it is a spiritual imperative and on both sides. So for all of us to be called to that deeper looking and gazing and being alive in the world, I don't know that I would survive it, but like with Paul, the question for me more is, until something happens, can I contribute something that will make it possible for your children and grandchildren and great grandchildren to inherit a beautiful earth that we've managed to enjoy so so I don't know.

Kassie Ripsam 03:15

So what part of a driver's test do you think you would most likely fail or do poorly in

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 03:24

Gotta think about that.

Laurie Gordon 03:25

Well, yesterday, I'll just give Paul an extra moment. Yesterday, I came out of an interfaith Earth care gathering and didn't realize that it had that what had melted had frozen quickly. So I'm from California, but I live in a snowy area in Central Oregon, and I never got to do the wheelies in the parking lot, you know, with someone teaching me. So my car actually did a little fish tailing [MA: a little fish tail yeah], and yeah, you know the good I guess the good news was I didn't know her react. I just kind of let it correct itself. But I but if you took me and made me do that part of driving, I'd have a hard time.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 04:09

Yeah, our we, our driveway is actually made of like sand and so, like, it has, I don't know what to call them. They're like water redirecters, I guess, like little hills that redirects the water when it rains. So sometimes we'll do a little bit of a fish tail. But thankfully, Mommy did get to the I get, they're called donuts, and so she is actually pretty good at that one. But it always scares me when we do the little fish. Today, we live in

Kassie Ripsam 04:42

We do live in Florida, but our parents are from Michigan, and a week or a couple of weeks ago, I don't know I was talking times, sometimes, anyway, my point is we got, we got eight inches of snow, and we're a little bit of ice, a little bit a. Well, it melted and then kind of refreshed, yeah, yeah. So they might have been able to drive, but we're a little bit scared to go down the road.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 05:09

How about you Paul, Mister Paul,

Paul Bethel 05:14

yeah, well, I took driver's ed in high school, and I was in the Midwest, so we actually did go to a large parking lot, and they taught us how to do donuts and how to recover from spins and things. It was a lot of fun. That's back when it was a high school class. I guess insurance made that impractical, but probably now the worst thing I would do is I would have a problem with backing up, because I can't get used to looking at the rear view camera yet. It's a thing that all the new cars have. I'm just, I can't and and I learned how to, like, you know, twist around and look back, put your arm up. And I don't have the flexibility to do that anymore. So I try to go straight forward as much as possible and avoid having to back up. So if there was part of that on a test, I would probably do poorly, or else I'd cripple myself trying to back up.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 06:11

Do you guys ever talk to inanimate objects,

Kassie Ripsam 06:16

You know, like yelling at your phone, your computer, or

Laurie Gordon 06:19

Yeah, I was gonna say, I swear at my computer. I do talk to rocks, but I consider them animate just slower than us, so rocks and rivers and things like that. But, yeah, anything that's technologically based, I swear at. You know, when I get the artificial, so called intelligence answer, I don't talk to that because I want to talk to a real person. So,

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 06:51

yeah, yeah,

Paul Bethel 06:55

I tell myself often, my computer is my friend. If you say it often enough, it becomes so. But I don't really talk to inanimate objects. I do talk to my dogs a lot, especially when I'm walking them, and they just get it in their head that they need an inordinate amount of time to sniff a particular shrub. And I'm wanting to to move on. So we have, we have some philosophical discussions from time to time on the importance of any particular shrub.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 07:29

Although I'm pretty sure, like I am pretty sure that a lot of us were yelling at our TVs last night with the Super Bowl. So there is that

Kassie Ripsam 07:42

I personally have a thing with trying to convince some objects to work the way that I want them to, and

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 07:51

even though they're doing exactly what they think that you told them to do, they cannot do anything else. And

Kassie Ripsam 07:58

There are some pets that I talk to that, I personally feel like it makes more sense to talk to some of them over others, like I'll talk to my cat, and that makes some sense, but if I try to talk to the chickens or the lizards, then they're probably not going to respond to me nearly as well.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 08:14

They have less facial expressions.

Laurie Gordon 08:17

Well, maybe it's a matter of learning their language. [Well, yeah, that you know too.] I figured that, you know, when I talk to trees, it's like, I want to learn how to I want to learn that language so I can really communicate, hear what they have to tell me.

Kassie Ripsam 08:30

I swear that the chicken who's been stuck inside is responding to to us better, or maybe I'm just hearing him better anyway, we're getting up, we're going off on bunny trails. What is the weirdest dream you've ever had?

Laurie Gordon 08:51

Well, I can tell you a dream I had decades ago that I still remember pretty vividly. I had this dream of this big fireball coming down this valley and destroying and melting everything, and it really scared me at the time, but what happened after the destruction went through was everything had been reformed and reshaped, and it was so much more beautiful. It had like cars had melted and turned into tables, and I was living in this crystal house with a crystal banquet table, and somebody came and knocked at the door, and the person at the door was one of the people that's been the most, was the most difficult for me in my life, and I was so happy to see him and welcomed him. And it's been kind of an iconic dream for me my whole life, that sense of, you know, things that scare us turning out to be something that holds promise for a better way of living. And so in this time of climate crisis, it still feels appropriate to think of things that are changing, but things that need to be transformed and made new. So that's. It's kind of my Yeah. So it's a dream that was scary when I first had it, and is holds promise for me now, now that I've lived into it for multiple decades,

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 10:12

Those things, yeah, they can be really, really different looking back on them than when you first saw them or first dreamt them. It's really beautiful sometimes.

Kassie Ripsam 10:26

And honestly, I'll say that although definitely not every dream holds some kind of meaning, there are definitely those that do.

Paul Bethel 10:36

I can't think of any mind boggling or shattering dreams that I've had.

Kassie Ripsam 10:43

Well, it can be a weird one, unless you just are one of those people who don't remember dreams.

Paul Bethel 10:48

I just don't remember I've woken up and remembered some dreams that either terrified me or concerned me, but after a day or two, I just I can't remember what it was or what it was about.

Kassie Ripsam 11:00

I've had plenty of dreams like that. So where did y'all grow up?

Laurie Gordon 11:05

I grew up in the Livermore Valley in California, and my granddad had a cattle ranch, so I got to spend part of my time just being out riding horses and looking at wildflowers and learning about loving the Earth from being on the ranch and then hiking in the parks around there. So I love that. Love it. I love the landscape. I love the trees. I love everything about it. But I don't live there anymore. I live in Oregon, and I now love it here.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 11:36

I love riding horses and they, Oh, sorry, go ahead.

Paul Bethel 11:42

I grew up all over. I was born in Iowa, but I grew up my kindergarten through about sixth grade. I was in Japan. My dad was a missionary. From there, my junior high time was in East Lansing, Michigan because my dad was assigned as a campus minister at Michigan State University, and then my high school was in Lamoni, and then my dad was at Graceland, teaching at Graceland College. So those are the three through my high school years, three places that I grew up in,

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 12:23

literally never been out of the country. We had an opportunity to with a choir, but, like, it was so expensive and we'd hardly be doing anything. So...

Kassie Ripsam 12:32

Yeah, um, we do, we travel a lot and have gotten to do a lot of things, as Marion mentioned, we have. We have gotten the opportunity to ride horses and to climb mountains and stuff like that, but we have never made it out of the country. Of course, inside the country, there are some things to see more than just some things. There are a lot of things to see

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 13:03

completely different biomes from one side of country to the next. So, Laurie, you're a research biologist. I was, how did that help you? How did that help you contribute to this resolution?

Laurie Gordon 13:20

Well, that's an interesting question. I mean, the easy answer is just it makes me less afraid of the science. It makes it easy for me to look at graphs and and understand it with at a more of a gut level, what's going on. But what I did, I helped with the mapping and annotation of chromosome 19 for the Human Genome Project, and when we had the first sequence, we also looked at the analogous region in chickens, and ended up doing a study Where basically got to look at evolution in the genome, like here, here's the same stretch of DNA, but here's how it's broken and rearranged in the other creature. And so we, we kind of looked at, you know, humans and and and apes, the very little difference. Dogs, a little more different. Mice a little more difference. But still, you could trace it all the way through down through frog sequence to see how we were related and how things had evolved and changed over time. So it's like really being able to look at this fundamental truth that drives my passion around climate change and eco, ecological issues, which is just how related we all are. You know, like, if you can trace the family tree back far enough, we're all cousins, and we live together in ecosystems. And so my sense of how beautiful and how fragile the web of life, the tree of life, is, led to my real interest in biodiversity loss, because it doesn't make sense to me if you think God is in and through all things that getting rid of things, kin that are our, that are our family, that are the place where there's the presence of the Holy in the world. That doesn't make sense to me to be destroying that and biodiversity loss turned into just a recognition that climate is the quintessential threat to the tree of life. So so there is a way in which both the science and the spirituality, part of my background came together and said people in faith communities are the ones who need to be at the forefront of addressing this issue, of destroying the way life was created to exist on this planet. So...

Paul Bethel 16:13

I just want to pitch in that being on the climate justice team with Lori. I have she has forced me to to really develop that idea of kinship, that to not be so human-centric. And the you know, the idea that God loves everything, that God created. God created everything, therefore everything is sacred. That just that i Which to me, makes more sense when you say sacredness of creation, you can't really say that and still be human centric. And so if we're going to have that as a catch phrase, then we have to, we have to acknowledge all life that was created and and I've learned that from Lori, grudgingly, I admit, but it's expanded my thinking. And I didn't mean to intrude on Laurie, no, yeah, that's fine.

Kassie Ripsam 17:10

What I think is interesting is you look at the story of creation in the Bible, and I'm in high school right now, and I have to take history and science and all that, and it doesn't exactly and at first I didn't think it lined up with the story of the creation, and I didn't want to accept it. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized with how little we know in a scientific point of view about the way the Earth was created, and I think about that, well, doesn't that mean that it lines up more than I think? And I was able to put two and two together and realize, Well, science and spirituality can coexist. The more sad and thought thought about that, the more I just thought, Well, isn't that interesting?

Laurie Gordon 18:10

Yeah, the weaving of creation is a story that's told in many different ways, and there's truth in all of them. My experience as a research biologist was to really recognize and be able to participate in it, and my experience of it is not so much one of limiting my faith, but actually expanding my faith. That it it kind of takes some of the limits off of who I think, or who I was taught God ought to be, and kind of

opens up the possibilities for this presence that's creative and still creating and weaving creation together, even today, Even while we're working on pulling it apart, creation herself is continuing to create new possibilities, and that that's a place that gives me hope and deepens my faith. So yeah,

Kassie Ripsam 19:17

Paul, what are some of the things that you have learned by sitting in on efforts by other faith traditions?

Paul Bethel 19:27

Think the biggest thing is it's convinced me that climate change is a faith thing. It's a church thing. You know a lot of people, we hear a lot of people saying, this is political. We shouldn't be involved. You know, this isn't something. This isn't appropriate for church. But you know, people like like the United Church of Christ, Jim Antal, Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, she's an Episcopal priest. They preach climate from the pulpit. They mix in the sacredness of creation, as well as our directive to steward creation, and the idea that climate change is causing human suffering, and it's going to become worse and worse. And if that isn't a church thing to alleviate human suffering, I don't know what is. It was through one of those two that I there's a guy named Gus Speth who was a lawyer, and he said, you know, he used to think that environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. And he said, you know, after you know good science, 25-30 years, we could fix this. But he says, I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and lawyers and and scientists don't know how to change that. What we need is a spiritual and cultural transformation. And who's going to do that, if not the church? So that that's kind of that's what I learned from them. But

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 21:19

people don't realize saying that politics shouldn't be a church conversation is that Jesus had politically heated conversations. Well, not really politically heated, but he had conversations that involved politics with his disciples. The Good Samaritan. The Samaritans were not very liked by the community that he was in when he was talking about this, so the fact that he was portraying the Samaritan as the really, as the good guy in this kind of conversation was political and kind of wouldn't be perceived well by a lot of people.

Kassie Ripsam 22:09

It's often a loss in not only church, but sometimes in our home environments, to avoid conversations that sound political, even if it's not just political, if it goes beyond politics, sometimes it's still avoided because it makes people uncomfortable, because it's associated with what you hear in the news. And that's kind of a loss to just avoid those conversations because they need to be talked about and they need to be resolved.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 22:44

Climate change being a pretty good example of that.

Laurie Gordon 22:47

Yeah, really good example of that. But one thing, you know, just the conversation we had earlier about learning to speak the other language, you know, with our with our dogs, or with the with the trees, there's a way in which trying to learn how to speak the language across our political divides is an urgent

task, and avoiding is not going to help us learn, learn the language that that allows us to communicate what's really on our hearts. And there are some pretty thorny, difficult issues, but we that's not what the topic of the podcast is but I also want to say about Paul is that having been with Paul on this climate team, I've learned so much from him about really taking to heart and finding courage to speak truth like you're as you're talking about, to speak truth Across the political divides, to speak truth about justice and how that is not a separate issue from climate, but is a an interwoven issue that we as we look at all the effects of climate with migration and the way in which those who have been less privileged are the ones who've taken the, born the brunt of it. And if you want a spokesperson for that polish, your polish, your guy, so.

Kassie Ripsam 24:13

So. Laurie, [yes?], you mentioned having studied Christian mystics. What are Christian mystics?

Laurie Gordon 24:24

So this is a dangerous topic to let me loose on, so I'll try to keep it brief. The Christian mystics are those who take seriously the encounter with a living presence, with the living God. So through time, they are those who have devoted themselves to a contemplative path that is not made complete unless it moves into that place of service and action to the rest of the world. Christian mysticism is about being. Embodied it's about. I would think of Jesus as a mystic, one who whose prayer and allowing the truth of what it was to be fully human, to take root and be poured out in service of the poor and mistreated and and socially marginalized and oppressed is completely breathtaking. So thinking about your zombie question, the Chris the mystics, are the ones who call us to wake up to see a bigger picture, to recognize the pattern and the presence of spirit in and through all things. And so I could give you a ton of examples. One of the most famous is probably St Francis of Assisi. He chose not to have possessions. And when he was challenged and said, oh, you should have possessions. He said, Why would I want to own anything? Then I would just have to take up weapons to defend it, defend it. So he he's he issued violence by saying, I don't need to consume so much. That's really relevant to the to climate action, right? And he, he felt and saw himself immersed in, you know, with earth, air, fire and water. Brother, sis. Brother, the turtle you saw on the road, you know, he would have, he would have taken the effort to sidestep and make sure that he moved that turtle, the safety we know he did that with worms. So, they lived these lives that showed us what's really possible to be human. And there's a there are mystics from that show us that instead of being half awake or fully asleep, or giving in to the worst of our potential. You know, our egos, the Mystics are the ones who really actively went in and said, How do I cultivate humility? How do I cultivate an attitude that says I'm not better than you, but I'm also important, and my gifts really matter. And at the heart of that was is the recognition that the Divine is in all of us, and whether we see it or not, and so they just provide this way of bringing prayer and attention to God into the action and service that they offer to the world. And I could go on, but I'll stop there.

Kassie Ripsam 27:54

I do not know how to respond to that, except to assure you cool, except to assure you, Miss Lori, that the baby turtle does have a home now.

Laurie Gordon 28:02

If we're all mystics at heart, when we let the light that's inside of us be what guides our actions, the baby turtles are going to find a safe home and so that so you are a mystic too. You just didn't know it. I really do believe that when we honor the truth of God in our hearts, that's we're dipping our toes in the water ... how we want to act in the world.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 28:32

It's really cool. And I think that's honestly like, really powerful. So, Mr. Paul, you said that our faith tradition look disengage on the subject of climate change. What are some of the ways you've seen evidence of that?

Paul Bethel 28:49

I don't want my church to be irrelevant. I think climate change is causing human suffering, and it's going to cause human suffering of biblical proportions. Um, portions, probably it within my lifetime, for sure, within your lifetimes. And I don't want, I don't want my church, to be stuck in the thoughts and prayers category. I think that we, we should be leading and even a small church like ours, if we are of one heart and one mind, we can move the needle if, if 20 or 30, especially in this country, if 20 or 30,000 church members were to call their Congress person or their senator and said, Look, this is what I want you to vote for. It makes a difference. So few people call that. If we could, if we can even Marshal a small percentage of our membership to become activated and to push for some, some. And things that we need to have happen we can make a difference.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 30:07

Yeah, honestly, like, I do agree with the fact that just the small percentage can really make a difference. And like bringing this to a giant um group people like a World Conference, really does make a huge difference, even especially.

Kassie Ripsam 30:32

And personally, I think although it is great to have climate change in prayers, there's so much more we could do than just that. We can do something in our daily lives for that too.

Laurie Gordon 30:49

You've Spoken like a true mistake.

Kassie Ripsam 30:56

So, to get into the more business questions, could you tell our listeners about the effects of climate change, like, how could, how could it affect us, specifically us and all the and all the other people in our church?

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 31:13

Yeah, and just like us too, specifically.

Paul Bethel 31:19

What I think, in my opinion, the greatest threat right now is the overheating of the planet. And there's so many facets to the environment, but I think it's the overheating that we have to get a handle on, no matter what. So, I mean, we don't have the time to to manifest, you know, all, or to share all the ways that this fever of our planet manifests in our lives. But I think the really easy way to say is just the increased number of severe climate events that we're experiencing now, and they and they will get worse and worse. They've steadily been climbing over the last in your lifetimes. Yeah, you know, Hurricane Helene and Milton is estimated to have cost 100 billion dollars in damage. Some estimates are as high as \$250 billion the weather is the fires out here in Los Angeles, just in the last month, our estimate, AccuWeather, says it's going to be \$250 billion in damages. But \$250 billion that's more than the annual budget of like 80 countries in the world, countries, so that's more than they spend in an entire year of a functioning government, 500 billion. Combine those two events, or those three. 500 billion is the annual budget of Canada. So we can absorb these hits, because we're rich and we've gathered all the resources from around the world, but these same climate disasters, they are happening all over the world. And what happens in these smaller countries whose annual budget is a billion dollars and they have \$100 billion climate event, they either die or they leave, and we're insulated. We don't realize that, but it's coming. We can't keep absorbing these hits forever, and so I mean, I think that makes climate change the most pressing social and theological problem of our time.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 33:42

When you see these graphs, this change looks really small, like on the point something percentage. But people don't realize that these more fragile species, and even, like especially even the weather events, are affected by these point something percentage marks,

Kassie Ripsam 34:04

Yeah, and to the point of what Mr. Paul was saying, I was looking at history lessons, and we got into some of the finances of more recent countries, and it labeled some countries as failed countries, and I'm just like, they're built countries. We're how rich, and we're not giving them anything, and they're the failed country. No, no, we're in a disaster zone right now. It's sad.

Laurie Gordon 34:41

It's sad and it's dangerous, if, if it goes unchecked, there are already parts of of let's broaden it beyond the United States. There are parts of India. They get so hot in the summer now you can barely you can't work to make a living. Because it's too hot to function. Pakistan, a couple years ago, I think it was, 30% of the country was inundated with floods. 1000s of people died. There was a huge bush fire in Australia, and these heat domes that we get off of the coast here, the West Coast, that kill billions of sea creatures, because our oceans are also overheating and the and we'd already be beyond habitable if we didn't have the oceans absorbing the equivalent of, can't remember the statistics of how many billions worth of Hiroshima level bombs that have been that much heat has been absorbed in the oceans. And so we already have people fleeing. We think the immigration crisis and climate crisis are two separate things. We have people who cannot feed their families because of droughts in South America and in Africa, and we have big multinational corporations going in. We've, we've encountered stories people in the church, even, who live in these areas where they're trying to protect their streams and waters, but they but big multinational corporations are coming in and polluting. So, yeah, I like, I like your question of what, what constitutes a failed state. And in the one of our favorite folks, people

around climate change is Catherine, hey ho and what she says is, what is climate change other than a failure to love? She looks at the biblical injunctions to take care of each other, take care of the poor and and realize that that's how she wanted to spend her life. Was doing climate work, recognizing climate change is nothing more than a failure to love. So getting back to Paul's point about faith communities and the role that we could be playing to if, if we would wake up and see the larger picture. Going back to your zombie question right at the beginning, to not stay asleep, to not be dead, but to really live and be willing to look and see how all of these justice issues are now fully intersectional and intertwined with climate issues. They're not different issues.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 37:35

Yeah, in the resolution you reference the verses, Doctrine and Covenants, 157 as well as 163 3b How have these verses impacted your life and your desire to improve the environment for both of you?

Paul Bethel 37:56

I like the phraseology in 150 points section seven. And that was, that was, that was so long ago. That was W Wallace Smith, which is like a history for you, but the phrase, you know, we've gotta do this 'while there is yet day.' It's just a, you know, it's, it's a phrase that means, you know you gotta hurry up and you know the the in the other 163 you know challenging cultural, political and religious trends that are Contrary to the reconciling and restoring purposes of God, the cultural and political and economic trends are to continue to exploit, continue to extract, continue to burn all in the name of profits. And we need to be the religious trend that challenges those those trends, and we need to do it quickly. While there is yet day, because we're running we're running out of time. The Paris Accords were 10 years ago, and everybody agreed, like, like, I think all but one or two countries sign the Paris Climate Accords that we have to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 and well they, I think they phrased it well below 2.0 because they all recognized that at 2.0 there was going to be catastrophic events. And, you know, right now, there's probably several 100 million climate refugees scattered around. We don't track that, but when that becomes a billion life on. Planet as we know it will be so vastly different that all of our lives will be impacted. And that's the while there is yet day we need to act while there is yet day before that number of clients to a billion, because once we get there, the recovery is going to take way too long. We're talking generations and generations. That's what those two scriptures kind of highlight for me.

Laurie Gordon 40:32

Yeah, I'll tell you that I was a senior in high school in 1972 at my first World Conference, when section 150 was brought to the church. So it's really close to home for me, that's, you can do the math, but it's, well, it's over 50 years ago, that the church received the wisdom that said, these are portentous times. That's 1972 the earth is being destroyed by greed and extraction. And I think about the earth that I knew when I was your age, and what I know now, and it's still beautiful, but I can, I can, have experienced the loss of species, the loss of stable climate. It used to be when I would drive north, I would, my windows, windshields would be splattered with insects already. I can drive north on I5 in California, up to Oregon, and you don't get that anymore, because so many of the insects are already gone. And what I really want is a world in which the coming generations will be able to experience the the kind of beauty that if we would have been able to respond 53 years ago, how different our world would be today. But back then, we everybody thought we still had time. We don't think that anymore.

Paul Bethel 42:20

Some people still do,

Kassie Ripsam 42:25

Yes, unfortunately, there are some people who wish to go slower or don't even believe that we are in an emergency at all. Um, but I guess that's why we're here talking and...

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 42:41

We have time to fix it, but we don't have time to wait to fix it.

Kassie Ripsam 42:46

So, what are some things that both of you want to see done on a church level to reduce fossil fuel use?

Paul Bethel 42:58

I'd like to see us declare, declare as a church, the need to first stop the growth of fossil fuel expansion. We're, we're burning more oil and gas today than we were 10 years ago, when we realized it was a problem. We are burning more gas and oil today than we were when we declared a climate emergency at our last World Conference, and then, as a group, declare our support for renewable energy. And then, I would like to see us be on the edge so when we get to supporting a ban on plastics, I want us to be in a position to say, yes, we want in on that. We support that. If it's what I mean, there's just so many different things that are going on. I don't want to be the last ones that sign on. I want to be closer to the front.

Laurie Gordon 44:06

Yeah, I want us to really come to be signal communities that show what's possible if we take seriously the sacredness of the very land on which our buildings and campgrounds are sited as being fully sacred. What would it be like if we turned our campgrounds into places that are trying to be run in a way that is sustainable for the earth as a as a way that we're a place where people could come and learn about that, where people could come and say, Oh, this is what's possible. What if we were to put solar panels on on our churches? What if we were to put heat pumps in? What if we were, we had, we were to say, let's let the lawn, or at least part of the lawn, go back to and be wild. What if we, you know, said, let's, let's, let's tend the old growth trees that we have and plant new trees. How to be at the forefront of those who would keep this needless destruction from happening. And I think there's a lot of people, particularly folks young, younger folks who are coming up, who are seeing and living with their lives being severely impacted by climate issues. Let's be relational. Let's, part of, part of it is just loving each other so that we're better at loving the world and vice versa. So, I think that there's a lot of things we could do. We could do community gardens. We can take out our lawns and and plant natives, native plants and pollinators. We, we can show the world what's possible if we really caught on. But the first thing is going to be maybe a, maybe a congregation just needs a green team so that they can learn about this and figure out what to do next and take the next step. Instead of dreaming so big, they just need to say, Oh, our next step is going to be, um, composting the waste from potluck. Let's take the first step, but then let's keep taking steps together.

Mary Anne Bennett-Ripsam 46:38

Yeah. Like something that I would like to see done, see done, just starting to practice green stuff would probably be, like, maybe even, I don't know, starting getting a beehive and, like, starting doing that. Because not only is that putting pollinators in your area, it's you get honey out of it too. So, like, there's really cool stuff from that. And like, if you ask, someone's probably going to be willing to do it to take care of them.

Kassie Ripsam 47:12

My younger sister is really into this stuff. And in our older in our old congregation, she had us replant the garden, and she had us put up a bat home. She really insisted that we had to help any of the wildlife that may be living in the more city area that that our congregation was in, and we were surprised that there actually was wildlife.

Laurie Gordon 47:38

yeah, yeah. And also, what would it be like to be more responsive to how climate is impacting everyone around the church, and not just those of us in North America? What if we really took to heart being a world church?

Kassie Ripsam 47:51

I think that is a bit of a more struggling question, because there are people who are reaching out, but there are some people who aren't able to go and find people outside of their area, and there are people who are trying to find ways to be a world church right where they are. So it's a complicated question to try and answer, because it's a layered one. That onion. Yeah, it's a bit of an onion of a question.

Blake Smith 48:24

You've been listening to part one of a two-part conversation regarding 2025, World Conference resolution g5 climate emergency, fossil fuel reduction. Be sure and watch for part two of this very important and engaging conversation coming soon to Project Zion.