

Interfaith EarthKeepers Meeting November 26, 2025

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church of Eugene

Moderator: Dennis Reynolds **Notetaker:** Tom Boyd

In attendance: Tom Boyd, Cynthia Black, Carl Bybee, Britni Cacan, Sue Craig, KC Hancock (Via Zoom), Ron Hess (via Zoom), Katharine Hunt, Mark Lindberg, Penny Palmer, Barb Reuter, Dennis Reynolds, Eric Richardson.

Invocation/Check-in: Dennis read Joy Harjo's poem *Remember the Earth*, a reminder of the interconnectedness of all things. Check-in occurred after our guest presentation, and involved a request to share 6 thoughts on gratitude.

Continuing Issues / Upcoming Events

Resilience Project. Guest Eric Richardson presented on his work with Beyond Toxics. That organization has traditionally focused on identifying toxins in the environment, and continues its efforts around landfills (e.g., Coffin Butte), methane emissions, and waste treatment. The organization is evolving to address resilience, with a focus on relationships, housing, water, and food.

Eric noted that he has been working to advance climate justice since 2017. He left the local branch of the NAACP after nine years in 2021. He returned this year to work with Beyond Toxics on grants and local initiatives directed at community resilience. He noted that Lisa Arkin of Beyond Toxics has been working to put these ideas in policy.

Eric cited American industry's long history of practices that put persons and groups of lower socioeconomic levels at greater risk of exposure to pollution and other toxins. He noted that locally, African-Americans were displaced to West Eugene, an area of industrial concentration. Residents in that part of the city have average life expectancies 18 years shorter than residents from Eugene's South Hills. He referred attendees to the City of Eugene's Equity Atlas: <https://www.eugene-or.gov/5491/Equity-Atlas>

Eric described and shared visual representations of a specific regenerative project he is helping to coordinate. A former church property (Our Redeemer Lutheran Church) was purchased by Square One Housing Project to create the Our Village Co-op, a "village" of affordable housing units, a meeting area, and a garden providing free food for the community. The garden space is part of the Amicus Garden Collective, which has its roots in the Annie Mims Memorial Garden, a tribute to one of Eugene's African-American pioneers in race relations. The project is supported by a number of local organizations/ affiliates, NAACP, Beyond Toxics, and Nurturely.

Here is a link Eric provided to an upcoming event for Beyond Toxics, dealing with the cost of living in Lane County: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1FZsi4PTMH/>

Dennis asked how our group might support this endeavor. Eric suggested reaching out to Beyond Toxics Exec. Director Jen Davis. He noted that the organization is looking for someone with chainsaw expertise to help in harvesting usable wood from a red cedar on the property that had to be cut down. Eric said that he is hoping to work with local churches toward developing garden plots on their sites. He mentioned that Lane County Public Health will be presenting a "data dive" at 6:00 pm on 12/3 looking at trends in local housing affordability over the past two years.

Stronger Together Interfaith Potlucks. These are scheduled for 1/18/26, 2/15/26, and 3/15/26. Barb noted she has found attending these to be enriching.

COP30 Belem, Brazil. This convention on climate made little progress; worse, the United States was not represented. Even so, support was voiced for more funds to deal with climate impacts on Pacific nations.

Interfaith Alliance for Migrants Candlelight Vigil (12/16, 3:00-5:00). There is some lack of clarity regarding specific location, though the event will most likely take place at the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza and the Eugene Federal Building.

Outreach to other faith communities. Dennis and Carl have both reached out to contacts in the local Catholic Community. Carl reported having talked with someone from Laudato Si (AKA Green Encyclical), a group that had been less active of late, but is in the process of reenergizing. Tom invited friends/colleagues from the faith community to this meeting, but those groups were not represented this time.

Earth Care Interfaith Fund. Attendees were reminded of this fund as an alternate holiday gift option. Mark handed out some brochures and donation certificates and will send out links to PDFs of the documents.

Other. Cynthia announced that Eugene Friends will be doing a reading of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address and invited Earthkeepers to attend.

Local Organizations

350 - Eugene: Sue reported that 350 Eugene is gearing up for the upcoming Oregon Legislature's short session by promoting Plug-in Solar (AKA Balcony Solar) panels. Rep. Lisa Fragala of Eugene will be a sponsor of this proposed legislation. Cynthia added that her understanding is that the short session will propose environmental legislation regulating neonics (systemic neonicotinoid pesticides harmful to insects) and directed at decreasing food waste.

Divest Oregon: Britni said she is not aware of details yet, but understands the organization will be promoting new legislation in the upcoming session.

ACES: Dennis reported on that organization's recent train-the-trainers non-compliance training, and noted that there will be upcoming workshops for interested individuals.

Carl reported that Indivisible has been involved in resistance to a planned Amazon facility in Northwest Eugene. That group's focus will be on engagement through City Council meetings. He raised the question of Earthkeepers' priorities moving forward. This engendered further discussion and support for a longer meeting specifically to address this issue exclusively. KC volunteered to facilitate this discussion using a discernment tool she has found helpful. The plan is to devote a longer meeting time in January for this endeavor, 1/28 from 12-2 at First Congregational.

Education: Time did not permit discussion of the first two chapters of Bill McKibben's book, *Here Comes the Sun*.

Next Meeting: January 28, 2026 (no meeting in December)