

# **Green Preaching**

**in the**

## **Red-Blue Divide**

**Strategies and Tactics for Creation-Crisis Preaching**

**Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade**

**Lexington Theological Seminary**



# WHAT WE'LL COVER

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- Part One: Background – How I came to “green” preaching in the “purple” zone
- Part Two: Why Research is Important for EcoPreaching
- Part Three: Principles and Strategies for EcoPreaching
- Part Four: Resources for EcoPreaching





# PART ONE: BACKGROUND

How I came to “green” preaching in the “purple” zone

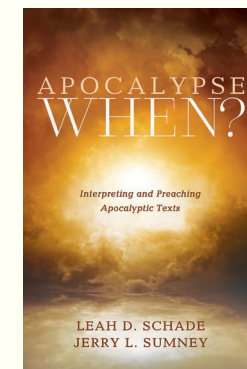
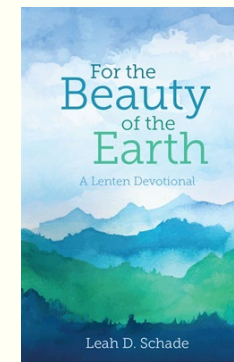
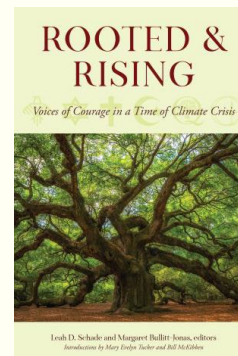
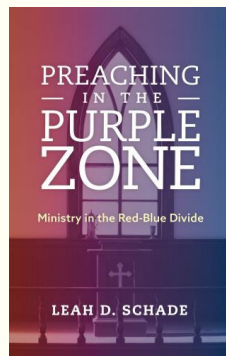
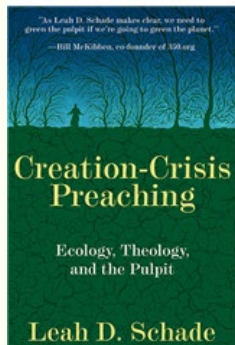
# The Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade

*Author, Speaker, Educator, Researcher*

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- Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship, Lexington Theological Seminary
- Ordained Lutheran (ELCA) clergy since 2000
- *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit* (Chalice Press, 2015)
- *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019)
- *Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis* (Rowman & Littlefield, November 2019)
- “EcoPreacher” blog at Patheos: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/ecopreacher/>











Reformation Lutheran Church  
Media, PA



Spirit & Truth Worship  
Center

*Blessed To Be A Blessing*



Spirit and Truth Worship Center  
Yeadon, PA



United in Christ  
Lutheran Church  
Lewisburg, PA





Testifying at public hearing on mercury emissions for coal fired power plants, Philadelphia, 2011



Advocating for stronger mercury emission standards with lawmakers in Washington, DC, 2011



Interfaith engagement at Shale Gas Outrage, Philadelphia, PA, 2011.



Interfaith protest of PA's Act 13 (the "fracking bill") followed by water blessing at Shikellamy State Park Marina, convergence of the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna, 2011





Service of Lament for Riverdale Mobile Home Park, evicted to make room for water withdrawal plant for fracking industry, Lycoming County, PA, 2012



Testifying at PA DEP public hearing against proposed tire incinerator plan in White Deer Township, 2013. Tire burner was defeated!



PA “Moratorium” Interfaith Leaders meeting with PA Secretary of Health and Surgeon General advocating for halting future leases on shale gas drilling, Harrisburg, 2016





Lexington  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



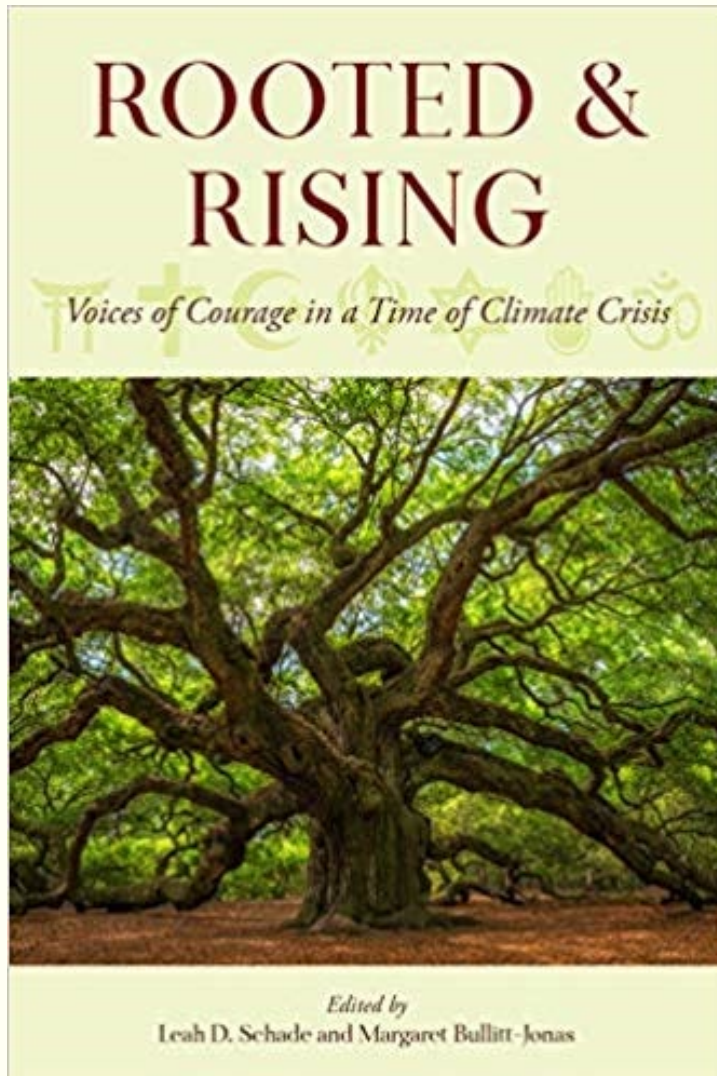


# **“The Dark Night of the Green Soul”**



# Great resource for sermons about Creation, climate, and justice

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Co-edited by Leah D. Schade and Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

21 essays by religious environmental activists

Spiritual, scriptural, faith-inspired wisdom for facing the climate crisis

Study questions

Spiritual practices

Lots of sermon themes and illustrations!



## PART TWO: WHY RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT FOR ECOPREACHING



# “Ministry, Preaching, and Social Issues” Surveys

Overall, samples are roughly comparable but do reflect some variation, a limitation suggesting some caution in making inferences about change across the two survey waves.

Becomes less concerning if willingness to preach about some issues is triangulated with similar patterns across different topics.

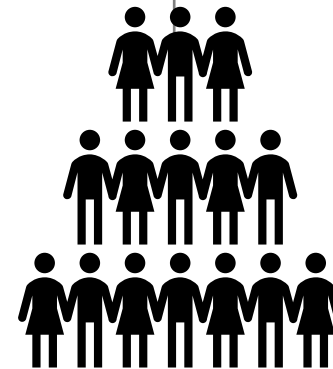
## National Survey of U.S. clergy

### 2017 Survey

- 1,205 respondents

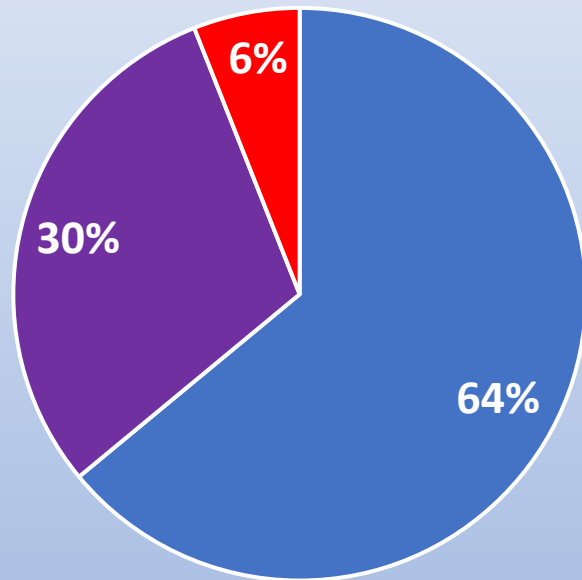
### 2021 Survey

- 2,664 respondents



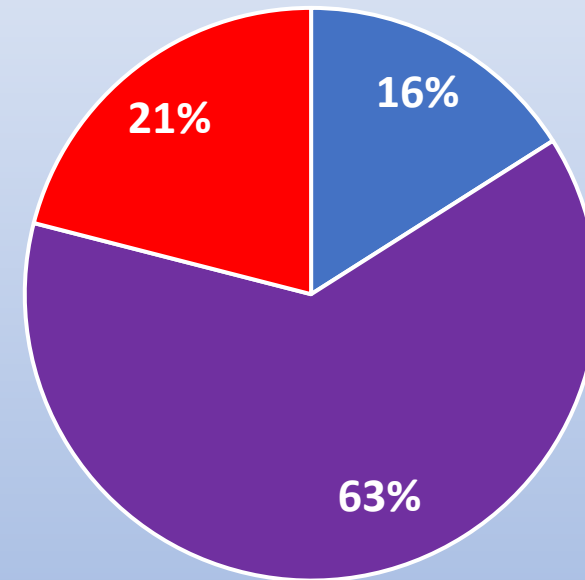
# Political leanings of clergy v. congregations (2021)

Clergy



■ Progressive ■ Moderate ■ Conservative

Congregations



■ Progressive ■ Moderate ■ Conservative

Political leanings of U.S. mainline Protestant clergy versus congregations, 2021.

Source: "Preaching and Social Issues Survey, 2021." Copyright, Leah D. Schade, 2021.



## How did environmental issues rank in 2016?

Preachers ranked **environmental issues** as **LOWEST** among topics they addressed in their sermons in 2016.



# Why preaching about environmental issues matters

- PRRI –AAR “Religion, Values, and Climate Change Survey,” 2014.
- Americans who say their clergy leader speaks at least occasionally about climate change are *more likely* to believe it exists than Americans who tend not to hear about climate change in church (49% and 36%, respectively).
- More than 6-in-10 Americans who report hearing about climate change from their clergy leader at least occasionally are *very* (38%) or *somewhat* (24%) concerned about climate change. . .
- Compared to approximately 4-in-10 (39%) Americans who attend congregations where the issue is rarely or never raised.”



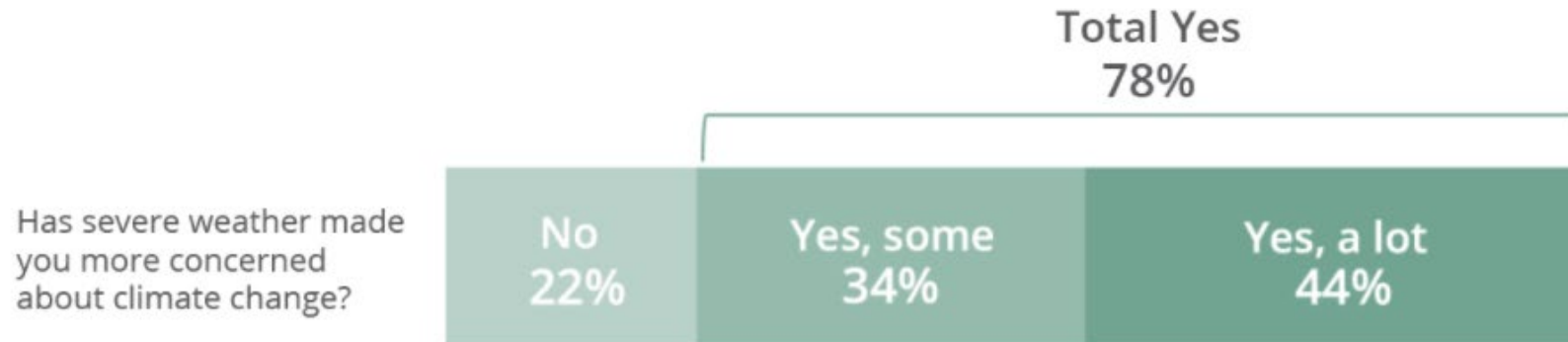


## Climate Concern Surges

ecoAmerica's research finds that 78% of Americans are more concerned about climate change as a result of severe weather, while only 22% are not. This concern comes with a higher intensity as 44% of Americans say severe weather has made them a lot more concerned, and 34% say severe weather has made them somewhat more concerned.

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**Severe weather makes the majority of Americans more concerned about climate change.** Survey question: Has severe weather made you more concerned about climate change? 1,109 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error





# Ministry, Preaching, and Social Issues Survey, 2021

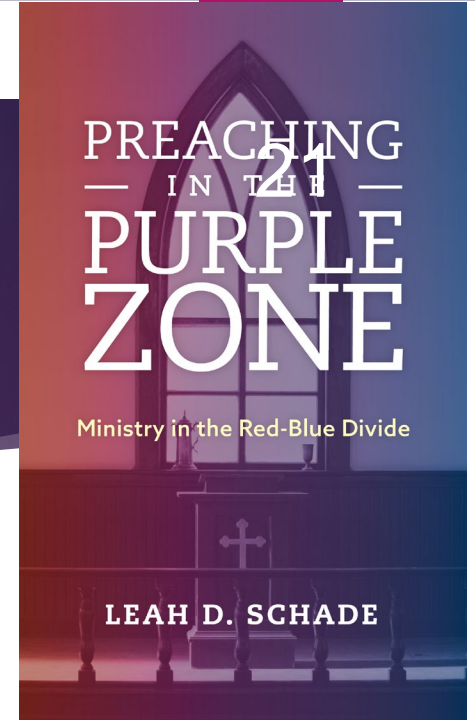
2099 U.S. clergy surveyed

What social issues did you address in your preaching in 2020?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Covid-19 pandemic	84.66% 1,777
▼ Economic issues (debt, poverty, homelessness, etc.)	74.37% 1,561
▼ Racism/White supremacy/Black Lives Matter	69.22% 1,453
▼ Hunger/food insecurity	59.65% 1,252
▼ Political divisions	59.46% 1,248
▼ Environment/climate change/pollution/extinction <b>Environment ranks #6 in the top ten!</b>	46.64% 979
▼ Ethics/integrity/corruption	46.16% 969
▼ Immigration	44.69% 938
▼ Addictions/substance abuse	44.55% 935
▼ LGBTQIA+ issues	41.07% 862



**WABASH GRANT PROJECT:**  
*Dialogue in the “Purple Zone”:*  
*Pedagogies for Civil Discourse in*  
*Online and On-site Settings*





- ▶ 10 Disciples of Christ Christian Church congregations
- ▶ Pastors and lay leaders trained in the sermon-dialogue-sermon method developed in *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide*
- ▶ Goal was to measure congregation’s capacity for civic engagement and social justice at conclusion of grant.
- ▶ Congregational surveys conducted before the training (2019) and one year later (2020)

## Which the following terms are “too political” to hear in a sermon?

**2019**

	TERM	Weighted Average
1	Capitalism	4.44
2	Guns	4.28
3	Government	4.1
4	Corporations	3.89
5	Advocacy and/or activism	3.41
6	Sexuality	3.32
7	Immigration/refugees	3.13
8	Privilege	3.11
9	Climate change	3.07
10	Economy	3.02
11	Gender	2.67
12	Race/racism	2.37
13	Rights	2.35
14	Injustice	2.3
15	Environment	2.13
16	Dialogue	1.92
17	Equality	1.78
18	Community	1.43
19	God’s Creation	1.28

**2020**

	TERM	Weighted Average
1	Capitalism	4.7
2	Guns	4.59
3	Government	4.4
4	Corporations	4.02
 5	Black Lives Matter	4.02
6	Advocacy and/or activism	3.5
7	Privilege	3.38
8	Sexuality	3.3
9	Economy	3.21
10	Climate change	3.13
11	Immigration/refugees	3.06
12	Race/racism	2.68
13	Injustice	2.57
14	Gender	2.5
15	Rights	2.5
16	Environment	2.44
 17	Covid-19, coronavirus	2.01
18	Equality	1.89
19	Dialogue	1.77
20	Community	1.46
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# Questions (answer in the chat):

- Do we “code switch” and use less triggering terms when preaching about climate and environment? Or is this just using euphemisms and capitulating?
  - Depends on context, preacher’s risks and vulnerabilities, relationship between preacher and congregation

## **Coming soon! Assessment Tool to Prepare for Sermons about Social Issues**

**Part A – Preacher’s Vulnerability, Risk, and Capacity for  
Addressing Social Issues in a Sermon**

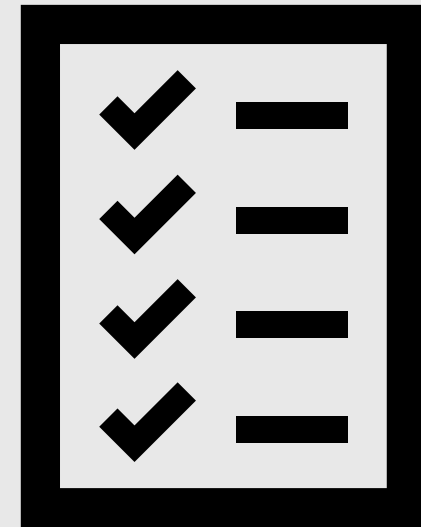
**Part B – Congregational Factors**

**Part C – Assessment of Relationships**



# Congregational Survey

- WHO: Identify 10 congregational leaders (board members, committee chairs, etc.)
- WHAT: 10-minute survey gauging interests in, opinions about, and experiences with environmental issues within a faith context
- WHEN: By Dec. 14 (and also a follow-up survey next year)
- WHY: Listen to our listeners! We can gauge the effectiveness of this cohort in equipping preachers to address environmental issues in their sermons is by listening to congregational leaders within our churches
- HOW: Look for email tomorrow with sample verbiage you can use to invite people to take the survey, along with the survey link





# PART THREE: PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR ECOPREACHING



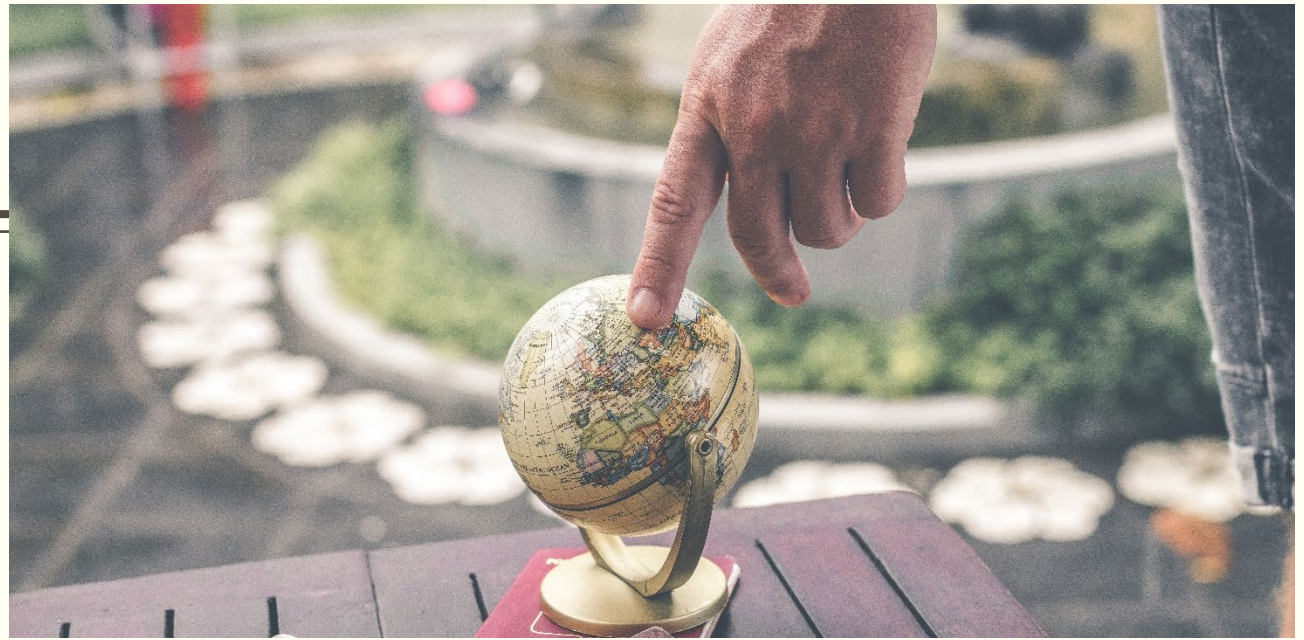
# 6 Ecojustice Principles for Reading and Interpreting Scripture



Norman C. Habel, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel, The Earth Bible (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 2.

## 6 Ecojustice Principles

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1. **The principle of intrinsic worth:** The universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
2. **The principle of interconnectedness:** Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
3. **The principle of voice:** Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.



## 6 Ecojustice Principles

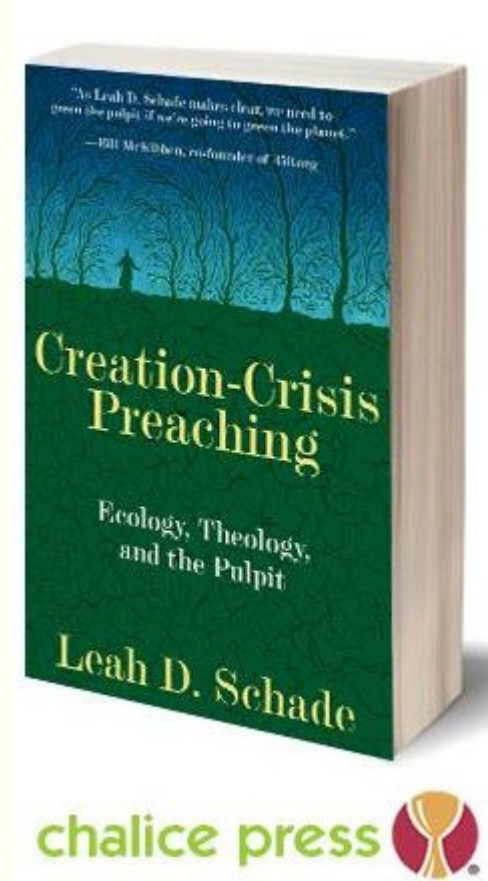
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4. **The principle of purpose:** The universe, Earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.
5. **The principle of mutual custodianship:** Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners with, rather than rulers over, Earth to sustain its balance and a diverse Earth community.
6. **The principle of resistance:** Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

## 4 Principals of an Ecofeminist Hermeneutic for Preaching

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Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit* (Chalice Press, 110).



# ECOFEMINIST ASSERTIONS

- Fundamental connection between the oppression of Earth and the oppression of women and those most vulnerable.
- Ecological crisis cannot be addressed without simultaneously addressing patriarchal, hierarchical domination systems.
- Ecological issues are directly tied to issues of justice for women, the poor, people of color, and all marginalized and vulnerable individuals and groups.



# 4 Principals of an Ecofeminist Hermeneutic for Preaching

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1. Focus on Earth-orientation rather than only human-orientation.

Reading Scripture through a “green lens” to ascertain how texts may be oppressive or liberating to women, children, those most vulnerable, and the Earth community.

2. Proclamation for both the human and other-than-human community of Earth.

Analyze the impact and power certain texts will have when preached in a community of faith within its ecological context.





# 4 Principals of an Ecofeminist Hermeneutic for Preaching

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## 3. Hermeneutic of remembrance.

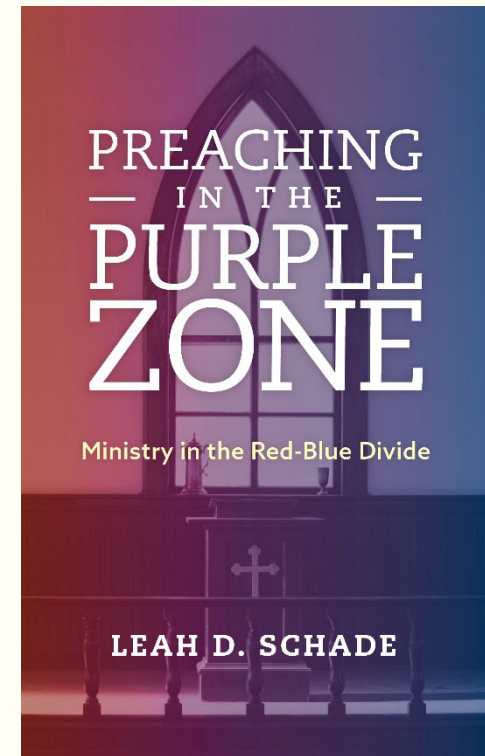
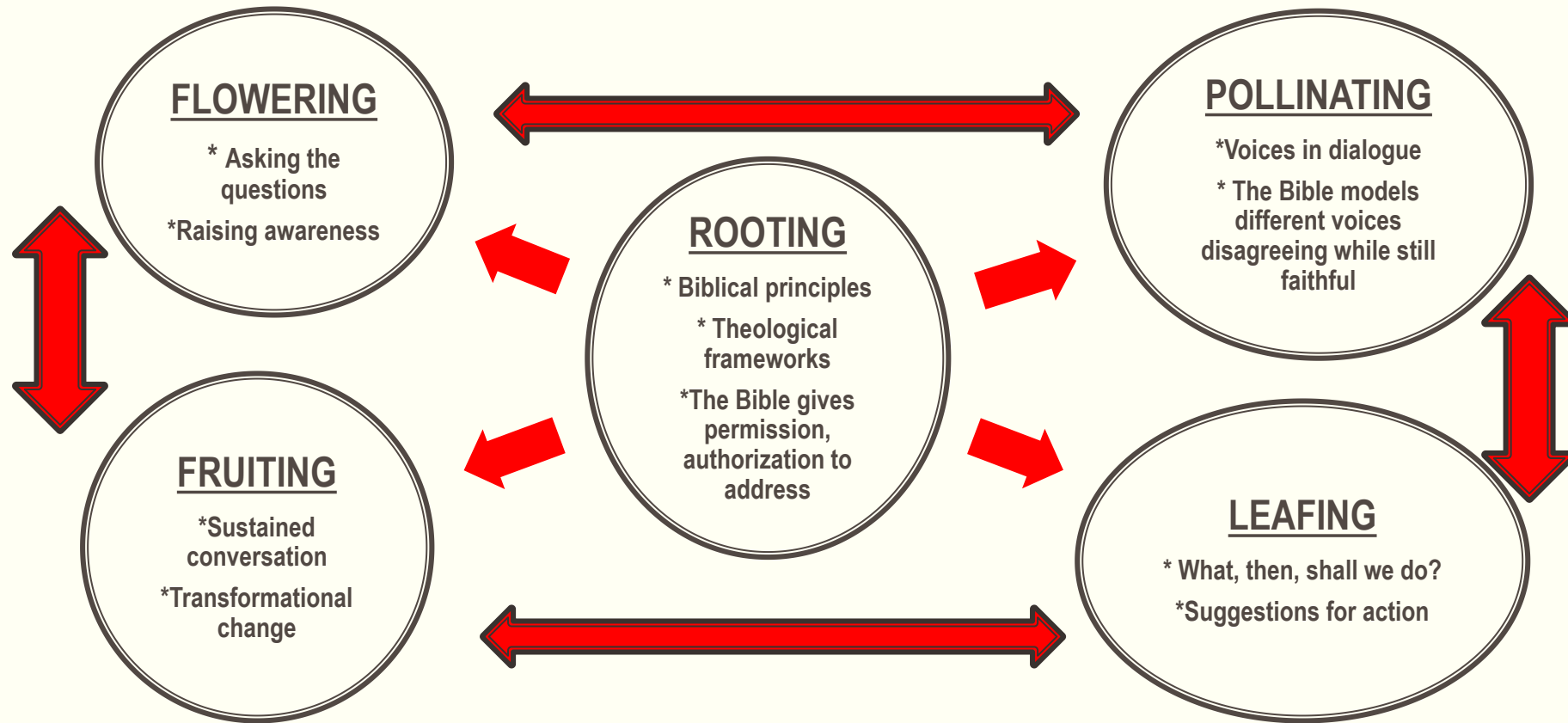
Recover the voice of women, Earth, and those most vulnerable often hidden or silenced within the biblical text.

## 4. Creative actualization.

Tell stories from Earth's and women's perspectives. Reformulate narratives in the perspective of the discipleship of equals among the human and other-than-human communities.



# FIVE PATHS OF PROPHETIC PREACHING



From: *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide*, Leah D. Schade (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019)





# PART FOUR: RESOURCES FOR ECOPREACHING

# EcoPreacher 1-2-3

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**1 Eco-Idea**



**2 Eco-Questions**




**3 Eco-Actions**



# Sign up for monthly installments of EcoPreacher 1-2-3!

EcoPreacher 1-2-3 is a partnership between the Rev. Dr. Leah Schade and the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, publishers of Eco Bible, a Jewish ecological commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures.

To see other EcoPreacher ideas and to sign up to receive future EcoPreacher 1-2-3 installments, click [here](#).



The screenshot shows the website for EcoPreacher 1-2-3. At the top left is the logo for the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development. The navigation menu includes ABOUT, PROJECTS, MEDIA, ECO BIBLE (highlighted), LEARNING, BLOG, CONTACT, and EN. There is a search icon and a DONATE button. The main heading is "ECOPREACHER 1-2-3" in green. Below it is the "RESOURCES" section. A featured resource is titled "Maundy Thursday: Exodus 12:1-14" in green. The text below the title reads: "Maundy Thursday and Passover have deep environmental connections. The eco-wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures can expand our experience of this holy day and the journey to Easter." Below this text is a date icon and "Apr 8, 2022". To the right of the text is a large image of a starry night sky with the Milky Way galaxy. At the bottom right of the image, the text "Stars And Baby Chicks: Genesis 15 And Luke 13" is visible in green. A gear icon is in the bottom left corner of the page.



BLESSED  
TOMORROW™

Caring for Creation Today



GreenFaith<sup>SM</sup>  
Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth



INTERFAITH  
*Power*  
& **Light**



Lutherans  
Restoring Creation  
Cultivating Hope & Healing for All





# DEVELOPING GREEN CONGREGATIONS

Lexington Theological Seminary

Feb. 27 – March 20, 2023

- ▶ A month-long completely online asynchronous course
- ▶ Equipping students to engage their congregation or local organization in the areas of environmental justice, the climate crisis, and eco-anxiety/eco-grief
- ▶ Developing strategies of resilience and restoration for and with God's Creation
- ▶ Students will choose a track for their final project based on the needs and possibilities of their local church and environmental context.
- ▶ Readings, presentations, discussions, and eco-spiritual practices to help us process our emotions and sustain our physical, mental, and spiritual health for this vital work.

**Auditing Costs for This Course: ONLY \$115!**

Application Fee **\$25** (nonrefundable)

Tuition **\$60**

Technology Fee **\$30**



<https://lextheo.edu/prospective-students/request-information/>

# Final thoughts



## Proclaim the Good News!

- **Share stories of where people ARE acting to protect God's Creation**
- **Show how we can participate in God's redemption of Earth**
- **Not false hope, but authentic hope**
- **Preach God's Eco-resurrection**