

The Possibilities of Climate Conscious Chaplaincy with Terry LePage and Alison Cornish

Ben Yosua-Davis: You are listening to Climate Changed, a podcast about pursuing faith, life, and love in a climate-changed world.

Nicole Diroff: Hosted by me, Nicole Diroff and me, Ben Yosua-Davis. Climate Changed features guests who deepen the Conversation while also stirring the waters.

Ben Yosua-Davis: The Climate Changed podcast is a project of The BTS Center.

Nicole Diroff: Hey, Ben, it is great to be back for another episode. I really enjoyed your last conversation with Derrick Weston. For those of you listening, if you haven't heard the episode yet, it is a deep dive into what the Bible says and doesn't say about climate change.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Thanks, Nicole. It is great to be in Conversation with you today and that was a great episode. In today's show, we'll look at climate change from yet another angle. We are considering the role of chaplains in a climate-changed world.

Nicole Diroff: You may have encountered a chaplain on a college campus or in a hospital. There are also military and prison chaplains, community chaplains, and movement chaplains. I've even heard of some big corporations hiring chaplains. Today we're exploring the question, what on earth can a chaplain do to address climate change? And or what might chaplains contribute to our understanding of how to address climate change?

Ben Yosua-Davis: Nicole will speak with author and speaker Terry LePage. She wrote Eye of the Storm: Facing Climate and Social Chaos with Calm and Courage. Terry has worked as a research chemist, a transitional minister, and a hospice chaplain.

Nicole Diroff: After you hear my conversation with Terry, Ben and I will bring in another voice, Reverend Alison Cornish. Alison has been instrumental in considering the roles of chaplains and what they can do in our rapidly changing world. She is the coordinator of The BTS Center's Climate Conscious Chaplaincy Initiative, where we've partnered with the Chaplaincy Innovation Lab and many others to create resources, support groups, learning communities, and more, all specifically designed for chaplains in a climate-changed world.

Ben Yosua-Davis: As always, we will provide you with a short grounding exercise. And at the end of the show, we will invite you to consider some possible, meaningful and achievable next steps.

Nicole Diroff: First, because we're talking about chaplains today, I just want to give a shout out to Chaplain Powers, who was the chaplain at Ohio Wesleyan University. When I was a student there, Chaplain Powers did this amazing thing of creating spaces for students where they were just 100% accepted. With all sorts of the stresses of college and uncertainty about who we were meant to be in the world, Chaplain Powers was just a safe person who created safe spaces. And because of that, our university found creative ways for people who are different from one another to get along. I realized after going into interfaith work that he was a big part of what set the stage for that.

Ben Yosua-Davis: He sounds like a really important person in your life, Nicole. I will confess that I did not have a similar experience with chaplaincy where I went to college. Our Protestant chaplain, I remember saying once on Sunday morning, he said, basically, I want to not have this worship experience be too good, because I really think you all should be going out and finding local churches. Which is why many of us who are Protestant turned to the wonderful Catholic chaplain who was on campus, who was really interested in forming relationships and working with folks across different faith expressions. And she

was the one, in fact, who introduced me to the Catholic liturgy of the hours, which is a wonderful way to pray your way through the day. There are five big books with about 20,000 bookmarks, and you have to flip from page to page. And she patiently sat with this Protestant for a very long period of time, teaching me how to navigate the liturgy of her tradition, for which I am very, very grateful.

Nicole Diroff: Lovely. So we will hear from Terry LePage in a moment.

Ben Yosua-Davis: But first, as in every episode of *Climate Changed*, we offer a brief moment of reflection and grounding. Reverend Alison Cornish, who will join us for conversation later in this episode, has a story to tell us. Allison is the coordinator of the Chaplaincy Initiative here at The BTS Center. And when city officials decided to cut down an old tree, including one in front of Alison's house, she created rituals for herself, her neighbors, and the tree.

Alison Cornish: There was a beloved tree in front of our house that was slated to be cut down. I was bereft. I think of this tree as more than human being. I had a relationship with the tree. I couldn't let its passing go unannounced, unmarked. I held a ceremony for the tree. A couple of people came. We talked about our feelings for this tree. We apologized to the tree that we couldn't derail this process that was in place. And then I left cards for people to write messages to the tree and leave it. It was amazing what people left in terms of naming their relationship with this tree and naming the relationship their children had to have with this tree. This was hugely risky for me. This is right in front of my house. This is the town that's made this decision. It's very official and everything, but I just needed to honor what I was feeling, in some ways, offer a chaplaincy presence to the tree and also to the community that had seen the tree as a companion.

Nicole Diroff: Wow. I love the way Alison lives out her values. In such embodied ways in the place where she lives. Thank you for that story, Alison. And now onto my conversation with Terry LePage, who brings a unique blend of heart and intellect to her work. Terry now resides in Southern California and has a background as a research chemist, transitional minister, and hospice chaplain. She facilitates nonviolent communication, practice groups, and grief circles through the International Deep Adaptation Forum.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Terry is the author of *Eye of the Storm: Facing Climate and Social Chaos with Calm and Courage*. The book is a compelling collection of resources and stories from around the world designed to enhance practical and emotional resilience through engaging essays, interviews, and reflections. It invites readers to reframe their values, confront fear and loss with courage, and find inspiration to live creatively and compassionately in challenging times.

Nicole Diroff: I spoke with Terry about her work and asked her to read a section of her book for us. Some of it is hard hitting as she talks about potential systems collapse. After we hear this conversation, Ben and I will respond to what we heard. We begin our conversation by asking Terry what motivated her to write *Eye of the Storm* and get involved with the Deep Adaptation Forum.

Terry LePage: The story starts with me reading a Facebook post in 2018. It kind of rocked my world. It was a paper written by a fellow named Jim Bendell, sustainability professor in England at that time. Just kind of saying, the emperor's got no clothes. There's no sustainability to be had here. What he did in that paper that was unique is he talked about the emotional effects of his realization on him and the identity effects that in turn stimulated me and a whole bunch of other people to start asking those really hard questions that are at root, spiritual questions. I was serving a small church as a transitional minister at that time. I had gotten politically active when somebody got elected to national office a few years before, I had trouble preaching without crying.

Nicole Diroff: Oh, wow.

Terry LePage: I've never wanted to try to convince anybody how bad things are.

Nicole Diroff: That's right.

Terry LePage: I just don't want that to be my job. At the same time, I want to respond to it in the way I know how. Which is pastoral. Yeah, I did a lot of discerning with the help of a fellow clergy coach and came up with a series called Grief, Gratitude, and Courage. Well, a workshop, and that was lovely. And then the pandemic hit, so I went for places that I could host it online. And that's how I discovered the Deep Adaptation Forum, for which I am deeply grateful, because those are my people. And I'm up to my eyeballs in Deep Adaptation Forum at this time.

Nicole Diroff: Beautiful. This book that you've authored, *Eye of the Storm*, I have been reading.

Terry LePage: So appreciating then you already know a lot about me. It is not an autobiography, but there's a lot of personal stuff in it.

Nicole Diroff: The way it starts is inviting us to see the climate crisis not as a problem to be solved, but rather as a predicament that we might respond to.

Terry LePage: It's a really important distinction and it's a really big shift psychologically, emotionally, spiritually. Problems are to be solved and predicaments are to be faced and responded to. Climate chaos is not going to get solved. It might get ameliorated, it might not. But forces have been set in motion that can't be undone and possibly in some other related regimes, things also maybe taking a course that is beyond our ability to fix. So resource depletion plus climate chaos equals not being able to rebuild the way of life that we're used to over the long haul.

Nicole Diroff: Your book speaks very specifically to the stories that we embrace. You lift up a number of stories we need to let go of and a number we might embrace in these times.

Terry LePage: Perhaps one of the most urgent is to redefine what success means. In our culture, success has meant getting to the top of a heap, which has a whole lot of injustice on the bottom half, 3/4, 9/10 if you look worldwide. It has meant honestly getting lucky. I mean, my son has a great job, can't afford a house, doesn't ever expect really to own one. And that has been a measure of success. Those definitions of success send people places that just kill the planet faster and that also are pretty soul crushing for them a lot of times. So changing the definition of success is a huge one.

Nicole Diroff: So what would be a new story to embrace as we try and do some redefining?

Terry LePage: The non human world has value, huge value. And we can be in intimate relationship with it.

Terry LePage: And you can take that story a lot of places. I particularly enjoy befriending parts of the non human world in very anthropomorphic ways. Like I talk to my plants, I talk to trees, I talk to rocks. I treat them like people because that's how I know to have relationships. Does that fix anything? No. But it invites us to have a kind of reverence that if we'd had it all along, things might have gone very differently.

Nicole Diroff: Courage is a word that you use throughout the book, accompanied with some other words like calm, compassion, creativity. Courage can take so many different forms.

Terry LePage: I think I see it a lot in the people, in the groups that I work with when they work hard to pull themselves together emotionally so that they can be somebody else's calm. Taking the time and investing in ways to care for yourself and regulate yourself so that you can be present for others is hard work. And it's hard admitting that we need that much help. Even though I think it's necessary work.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah, interesting. So honesty and vulnerability leading to the possibility of courage and an ability to be calm for others, an ability to lead, to offer calm leadership comes from that courage.

Terry LePage: The way I would say it is when you know somebody's in deep pain and when their pain scares you a little, like you do not really want to enter into their pain. The particular kind of courage that I'm inviting people to in this book is not all the

time, but when the time seems right and your own health permits to step into that pain with them and trust that the two of you together can carry it.

Nicole Diroff: In the book, you imagine a cliff and a shoreline. I would love for you to introduce that metaphor, and maybe that would be a good place to play with courage and calm. What do those concepts look like within that storyline of the cliff and the shoreline?

Terry LePage: What you've described, Nicole, is the crumbling cliff. That is my favorite story in the book. It fits reality as I experience it. And the idea is that those of us who think we're comfortable and safe are actually at the edge of a crumbling cliff. It has been crumbling for a while. People have been falling into poverty and homelessness and climate displacement, especially in California. We don't look, we don't want to know what's at the bottom of the cliff. We want to pretend it doesn't exist. We want to just paint it out of the picture. At the bottom of the cliff, people don't just disappear into the void. They land in a really rough and rugged zone, the tideline, where the tide goes in and out and lots of rocks, lots of splashing. Life is still possible for a lot of people at this tideline, but it isn't easy. Many times in history and before written history, people have lived and managed to thrive at the tideline, but with a lot more discomfort, a lot more loss.

Nicole Diroff: What does courage look like in that story?

Terry LePage: When you're at the top of the cliff, it takes courage to look down and say, those people are just like me. They haven't done anything wrong. They're not some other kind of people. They're just like me at the bottom of the cliff, and then ask yourself, what are you going to do about that? And whatever it is, it will seem inadequate. I'm sure it probably still matters that you know people who are struggling and that you allow your heart to be touched by that. For people at the bottom of the cliff, I cannot speak as well because I have led a pretty sheltered life and that appears to be continuing in the immediate future. Except I do know that the kind of stresses that you're under can lead you to behave very badly if you're not careful. It takes a lot of determination and self regulation to show up and hold on to your values when your survival's at stake or you've had huge losses.

Nicole Diroff: I know from your bio that serving as a chaplain, and I think in particular within the realm of hospice, is something that you have had experience with.

Terry LePage: I was a volunteer hospice chaplain for about a year. The work really appeals to me, as I call it a ministry of presence. Like, here's a thing that everybody's confused and scared, and I can walk in the room and go, this is normal. This is a thing. I'm not scared. I'll sit with you through it. I'll give you some signposts. And the relief is just palpable. And it's also so real when people are up against it. The fake stuff becomes pointless and people get so real. And I just find that really beautiful.

Nicole Diroff: As you think about hospice chaplaincy, what does that mean? That hospice chaplains are now in a context of a climate changed world. Are there ways that you imagine that reality will come up for the people they're serving and the chaplains themselves?

Terry LePage: The thing that comes to mind is that the question of legacy, some kind of continuity, may be more difficult. You may not have the same assurance if the elder is. My term is collapse aware. That is connected with the language of predicament and a sense in which some things are broken that can't be fixed. By now, then that elder is going to be understandably very worried about the fate of the people they leave behind. Likewise, the people who might otherwise take on a legacy and say, yes, I can honor that might say, uh, I don't know. I don't think I can. That's just a guess on my part.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah.

Terry LePage: So back to questions of identity again.

Nicole Diroff: Exactly. And what success looks like, as you were sharing, you know, the image of someone very close to the end of their life. And hospice could come to play whether someone is older or not as old, but in a situation of facing their mortality, closely wrestling with the biggest of questions, including what is success? What does it look like to be human in these times and living in a way that's purposeful and meaningful. A part of your book shares the experience of someone going deep with the science and then facing the reality of being confronted with the inability to be published or really listened to if they didn't conclude. On a very positive note, as I read your book, I saw that really as a call for honesty and a willingness to support those who are close to the science when there are times that everything they're saying doesn't end with a rosy conclusion.

Terry LePage: The thing I think we lose when we choose to have a rosier view on things than I do. And again, I'm not trying to force anybody anywhere. But what we don't get to do then is to think about, well, if 12 inches of rain in an hour or two is going to become normal, how can we protect people's homes from that? Let's spend on infrastructure. Which ground are we going to seed and say it's just not worth the bother of saving and stop rebuilding over and over again? So we are missing out on those kinds of hard conversations. How are we going to protect our food supply when the weather is completely nuts? And, um, those of us who are not farmers do not realize the hell that farmers have been going through the last couple years.

Nicole Diroff: So yes, some of what you just shared about conversations around our physical environment and farming and adaptation measures, but beyond kind of the physical landscape, what would your dream be for the emotional and spiritual landscape?

Terry LePage: I hope that the tools in my book are seeds out of which grow islands of sanity in the sense that Meg Wheatley uses it, or I might call them islands of compassion, where people work together for the common good, tossing out some of those capitalist and industrial values that have cost us so dearly and work hard at taking care of each other through hard times. That hard times will come. I have no doubt how we will respond to them. That's the big question. And the more we can respond with smart and compassionate community, the better off we'll be.

Nicole Diroff: I'm imagining Back to the Cliff and the Tideline story, the way in which the reality of a tide coming in and out and those dynamic changes really forces, but also invites a collaboration that is not necessarily needed when people are living in isolated settings at the top of the cliff. I don't know if everyone has had experiences to say that sort of collaboration indeed is beautiful and of the divine, but I have come close enough to moments to know that there's something really authentic about the human spirit that comes alive in that Kind of working together. That, actually, I think is an opportunity to be reclaimed.

Terry LePage: I agree. And we have a lot of learning to do.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah.

Terry LePage: Yeah. The funny thing is, we are more dependent now than any of those interdependent communities have ever been. But we use the medium of money exchange.

Nicole Diroff: Interesting.

Terry LePage: And to insulate us from realizing that there is a supply chain going all the way around the globe, growing the food that I eat and that there are massive machines tearing up parts of Texas to allow me to drive my car. So I'm so dependent.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah.

Terry LePage: But I think that I'm independent because I can use my credit card.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah, that's right.

Terry LePage: I guess one thing I'd like to bring up is the idea of not even attempting to be pure and allowing ourselves to be hypocrites. There is no way out of the system of industrial consumer society. Try moving to the boondocks and just create a whole new set of problems. So instead of trying to be pure, let's try to be compassionate and wise and have fun.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah. Thank you for that. I think that is such an accurate description of what so many people are wrestling with. Feeling a real dissonance between what they perceive as reality and honesty about the current situation and then an inability to

get pure. If that's the way we might frame it. Embracing imperfection, embracing compassion for one another and oneself. I feel like a lot of that is an internal wrestling.

Terry LePage: Yes. And I hear a lot of people doing external wrestling with their partners and their relatives, trying to get those other people to get on board with the same measures that they are taking to try to respect the planet. I'm not sure it's worth it.

Nicole Diroff: Interesting. Yeah.

Terry LePage: There's some grieving that has to be done to let go of that. So much grieving. Did I mention grieving? Grieving is a thing.

Nicole Diroff: Grieving is a thing.

Terry LaPage: We do a lot of grieving.

Nicole Diroff: Yeah.

Terry LePage: Yeah. And we don't stay there.

Nicole Diroff: The grief in that moment of someone choosing certain practices or behaviors in response to the climate crisis and wanting others to embrace those, also feeling the tension of how to live with that dynamic of feeling some conviction around what they're already doing and also not wanting to be, you know, a downer or someone who seems really focused on purity. There's all kinds of layers of grief in that situation.

Terry LePage: There's all kinds of grief all over this issue. Plenty. Plenty on all sides. Which is part of the reason people want to pretend it's not happening.

Nicole Diroff: Thank you, Terry, for this conversation. And for this book that you have authored and for what you're working on in the world.

Terry LePage: You're welcome. Thanks for inviting me. I finally found other climate chaplains. What a thrill.

Ben Yosua-Davis: One thing that really stuck with me from that conversation, Nicole, that you had with Terry was this idea of problem versus predicament. It really got me thinking about how it changes my definition in my own life of what it means to be successful.

Nicole Diroff: Hmm.

Ben Yosua-Davis: I'm curious how you responded to that in that moment and how your ideas of success maybe have changed as a result.

Nicole Diroff: Mm mhm. Well, your question just points to maybe the biggest thing my soul is wrestling with right now. Over the past maybe year or so, doing the work that we do at The BTS Center, I've really wrestled with what my North Star, what my guiding star is. As I, as I live my life, I wrestle with the structures that told me that kind of that guiding star was owning a home, having a job that would provide the things I need and you know, hopefully a little extra to give back, that I'd have a strong retirement account, to have sort of the means to be safe and secure. All of that feels a little in question. Success being defined much more in terms of trusting ourselves and our relationships. I want to be in a place where I can trust my future self to handle hard things.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Mhm.

Nicole Diroff: That's more important than some of the other things I drew security from. Trust in the relationships that I am investing in has become just more and more poignant and important. How about for you?

Ben Yosua-Davis: As I was listening to this, I was thinking back to kind of the conversations I've had regularly with my 20 something year old self who was typically type A, privileged, ambitious, really well intentioned, wanting to go out and change the world. And over time I've begun to learn how little influence I actually have on so much of the world around me. When all is said and done, what do I want to be known for in terms of how I carried myself in my life? And I find increasingly going back to the integrity I have in relationships, the ways that I'm able to respond in difficult moments and in challenges and hopefully in ways that can bring out the best in those who are around me much more than where my career will end up or how many books I publish or any of these other markers that in my 20s I thought that's what it means to live a meaningful life. I find myself both wondering whether those things are really feasible and also wondering whether they're actually really that worthwhile.

Nicole Diroff: Uh yeah. Terry talked a little about this in the moment where she talks about how this can come up for hospice chaplains who are accompanying people facing their mortality rather acutely and the way in which that leads to people reflecting on their legacy. We live in a time where people who are aware of some of the ways that our individualistic and consumeristic society has left both people and planet harmed. What does my life mean in that context is such a special role for chaplains to accompany that process? Chaplains often are not asked to give the answer, but more to go along for the journey.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Yeah, that chaplain function is played by different people in different ways throughout our society. I think about that role for local pastors in communities who very much serve that chaplain function for many of the people, especially within their congregation and accompanying them through these difficult, oftentimes unresolvable life questions. What does it mean to sit with someone who's dying or in the face of a tragedy that is completely senseless and may be open ended and unresolved and may shape the rest of a person's life? My parents were pastors and they talk about how they would talk to other pastors who were farther on in their careers and say, you know, what is the thing you most regretted from the choices you've made that have brought you to the place they're at? And almost all of them, without exception, would say, I wish I had spent more time with my children when they were young. That was the career regret they brought with them. And that's about really a ministry of presence. It's about being with your kids as they begin to navigate the predicaments that are part of growing up. And I see this with my 8 year old son and my 5 year old daughter all the time, where they come with some really, really big questions. We were at a field trip and we had a three hour drive back and we talked about some pretty serious stuff in the car. I would not have been in the place to just have those conversations and hold that space for them if I had not created the time to drive up to this three day field trip where they acted like maniacs with 25 other kids for three days. But that's also part of that ministry of presence. The witness that I've had from my elders is looking back, they say that was actually the most important thing. Not however many meetings you attended and where you climbed the ladder to, but how you were present with the people around you who you love.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Mhm. For the chaplains, I know one of the things that their work really highlights to me is that when you are faced with these predicaments, there is genuine value to care.

Nicole Diroff: I also think about the ways that chaplains who are being present with those who have been most deeply impacted by climate change often leave those encounters with an acute awareness of what's happening in our world and what needs to change. I've gotten to know a chaplain here in Portland, Maine, who spends a significant amount of time with our unhoused neighbors and has watched the ways in which the weather weirding that's happening here in Maine is impacting most acutely those who are unhoused in these times. There's kind of a common concept within climate work that those who have done the least to cause climate change are unfortunately, often, those who end up feeling its effects in most harmful ways. So she is drawn into really being aware of the ways in which flooding is increasing, the ways in which we have more times when the ground is supposed to be frozen that instead it's muddy, the ways in which the atmosphere is holding more water and so we get torrential downpours because she's spending time with and accompanying those who are in a tent or under a highway bypass.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Your story reminds me as well about the importance of witness. Sometimes when we're with folks, we can only do so much to materially change their circumstances. But being present with and seeing their suffering is efficacious and important in and of itself. Even if there's nothing we can do.

Nicole Diroff: That's powerful and a very distinct role of spiritual leaders in these times that does not require a degree.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Right, Right.

Nicole Diroff: There are many spiritual caregivers in our times and sometimes that may be the chaplain, but other times it is the caring person who's around. I'm thinking of another story where climate change showed up for a chaplain who I know. This chaplain serves in a university setting and shared with me that the head of the environmental studies department at their university came to the chaplain and said I really need help because my students are despairing. My students who are learning the science, I don't know how to continue to teach them because they need care and support with what they're learning. So this is a space where first that chaplain became acutely aware of what's causing the distress to these students and needed to draw on skills of meaning making in challenging times, skills of building strength through relationship and care of one another and also providing some care for the professors too. That's a role for chaplains in institutions with many layers is actually to care for all the layers of the system, including this professor who cares enough for their students to come and ask for this kind of help.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Mhm. It reminds me that we don't live in a purely material reality, that there is something that we carry within ourselves and that we carry between one another, that it is also important to nurture and that one of the things that can help us move through suffering is simply being able to do it together. It's okay that those questions are fundamentally unanswerable when there's a bunch of us in the same room not answering them together.

Nicole Diroff: Nice. Chaplains in some settings are doing very one on one kinds of presence and in other settings are doing that community building work, that togetherness building.

Ben Yosua-Davis: This is where we can think about the chaplaincy role inhabited by chaplains, but as you say, by lots of good, kind, compassionate people as part of what brings communities back to one another. When I think about Alison's story, in some ways she chaplained that tree through an untimely painful, traumatic death. That was a gift to her. It was a gift to her friends. It was also a gift to the tree. What does it mean to chaplain our other than human kin that are also suffering in this moment of planetary upheaval?

Nicole Diroff: I know one person who's engaged in trying to answer that is a woman named Trebbe Johnson who founded an organization called Radical Joy for Hard Times and is indeed a good friend of Alison's, who we'll bring back into this in just a moment. Trebbe has created rituals at broken places in our natural world. Healing rituals that see the place and aim to create beauty from brutality from brokenness. I want to just add an invitation to all our listeners that you don't need to hold a formal chaplain identity to, from time to time, assume a chaplain posture and relate to the world in a way that brings acceptance, care and insight.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Yes, a very loud amen to that.

Nicole Diroff: So let's bring Alison back into this conversation. She shared our grounding earlier. And as I mentioned before, Alison Cornish serves as the coordinator of the Chaplaincy Initiative here at The BTS Center. She transitioned from a first career in historic preservation to ministry, and she has always been driven by a calling to address environmental issues.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Alison has held various leadership roles, including Executive Director of Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light. She is a valued member of The BTS Center team who helps us focus on ecological grief, religious imagination and climate chaplaincy.

Nicole Diroff: As someone involved with continuing education for chaplains, Alison has spent much time considering what it means to be a chaplain in a climate changed world. We asked her to tell us what chaplains do and how that work is being updated and adapted for people living in our rapidly changing world.

Alison Cornish: Well, let's start with what chaplains or those who offer spiritual care already have. What is it that they're already doing, first of all, and probably most importantly, the chaplains that I'm aware of, that I'm in relationship with, empathetically and respectfully assist individuals and communities in accepting and making difficult choices and adapting to change. Imagine, for

example, a chaplain in a hospital who's tending to somebody who has just received a very difficult diagnosis. That's a great example of how somebody sits with that individual and works on what are the choices that we have here and how are you going to have to adapt to this change in your life plan. Chaplains understand trauma, and that is a growing field trauma informed. Whether we call it education or therapy or teaching, chaplains have to have an awareness of how trauma affects people and communities. Chaplains offer rituals and practices that honor communal loss and grief and move people towards healing so that there's a way of going forward. Even from the darkest of times, chaplains engage in theological reflection as a source of meaning making. Now, not every chaplain identifies with a faith tradition, but still that idea of deep thinking and taking what is offered in a sharing from an individual and really seeking the threads that will allow meaning to emerge from that. Something that we're having a lot of experience of these days is coping with uncertainty and holding questions that can't actually be answered in this moment, in this time, tending to loss and grief and brokenness. As part of a chaplain's work, chaplains also use a relational approach in serving people of all faiths as well as those of no particular faith identity. They're sort of the original interfaith or multi faith or pluralistic faith practitioners. That's really important. Chaplains cultivate and maintain hope and resilience again for individuals and for communities. And chaplains offer caring for the caregivers. One of the phrases that came out of my own chaplaincy training is the patient is not always the person in the bed. So the idea that the people who are tending to the people who have deep suffering also need care is really important. But hold on, those are some of the things that chaplains do in the normal course of their training and their work.

But when we start thinking about a climate changed world, there are some further or even different spiritual needs which are arising from our changing climate. And some of the things that we hear from our chaplains and that we also are in conversation with them about are people are holding some really grave doubts about the possibility of a positive future. What does the future look like that's different from today? And is it moving towards the apocalyptic or is it moving towards something that looks like the past? People are really questioning this idea of progress and that things always look better or are better. We know that climate migration is in process right now and that there's displacement from long term homes and lands and rootlessness and in some cases the likelihood that returning to home is simply not possible if where home is, is now underwater or has been destroyed by multiple wildfires. A lot of people are feeling a sense of disempowerment and feeling like they're a victim of global or existential and external conditions. It's like, where's agency right now? Where can we make choices or decisions in the midst of something that is so big and feels so overwhelming and so powerful? Young adults are facing questions about their future that even one generation back did not need to face at that age and in that way and in that formative moment of their lives. So for a university or college chaplain to not be thinking about climate change, I think would be a real, a real drawback to the authenticity and the veracity of their work work. So that would be an obvious place. Everyone needs a Climate Changed 101 someplace in their lives to understand what's happening, what the anticipated effects, particularly focusing, on systems vulnerable to climate, such as displacement and loss of homes and changing food supply and water issues and everything else that goes along that I think we all need, like a base understanding not only of the science of climate change, but also of the effects and the way in which they're already playing out and will continue to. Some of the disaster spiritual care that's been offered is extremely important, but I think we need to reimagine what the life cycle of disasters are, particularly since the anticipation and preparation stages are now much longer. We know much more about how to prepare for a disaster, but also the recovery stage. If we start thinking about man made and Nature made disasters, which I'm not sure there's really a clear dividing line around those anymore, we're moving from acute situations that could resolve back to some sort of normative state to a chronic pattern where we have one disaster after another after another. So that really changes what recovery looks like across the board. At The BTS Center, I think we're looking at theological, doctrinal and spiritual resources for sense making, meaning making, resilience and hope. So, inviting people to really dig deep into their home traditions or adopted traditions and see what's there that can really help us move through these times by building resilience and hope. The justice issues related to a climate changed world, particularly around diversity, equity and inclusion, are only going to deepen. So that level of education that we offer to chaplains I think could be really beefed up a lot. And along with that, there are unique needs for specific populations, whether those are elders or people living with a disability, children and youth, lgbtqia and plus individuals and communities, immigrants and those incarcerated. Elevating and teaching the ways that Nature can heal is incredibly important and particularly versus what I mentioned earlier about losing our faith in the natural world. I think that re-engaging with the natural world, particularly after a disaster that has affected somebody, is incredibly important work that chaplains could be cultivating and then normalizing, normalizing grief, normalizing trauma, informed care, normalizing climate displacement and the stories that relate to that. All of the things that we might see as outliers or one offs, we need to start thinking about how to bring that into this is the way that we live now. Yeah, that's a small list, but there you go.

Nicole Diroff: Thank you again Alison, for sharing your experience and expertise.

Ben Yosua-Davis: In each episode of *Climate Changed*, we invite you to consider taking the next step. Alison is actively involved in a BTS Center initiative called *Climate Conscious Chaplaincy*. We offer a series of programs, an emerging network, and a growing collection of resources for chaplains serving in a variety of settings.

Nicole Diroff: In addition to the videos and other resources on our website, we also provide opportunities for you to connect with others who are interested in doing chaplain work through a climate change lens. To learn more and take our chaplain survey, visit thebtscenter.org Under the Initiatives tab, select *Climate Conscious Chaplaincy*. In addition to engaging with those resources, I invite you as a possible, meaningful next step to think about a young person in your life and how you might accompany them in this climate changed world. That could be simply through a conversation where you accompany and witness to what they're experiencing. It also may be an opportunity to show up for something that they care about. As you consider relating to a young person or young people on these big topics, I highly recommend a book to you called *In Deep Waters: Spiritual Care for Young People in a Climate Crisis*. The Book is written by Talitha Amadea Aho and it's really good.

Ben Yosua-Davis: To provide us with more possible next steps is one of our producers, Anna Barron.

Anna Barron: Thanks Ben. I have just a couple more invitations for you, our listeners. As Nicole mentioned, The BTS Center has a page dedicated to *Climate Conscious Chaplaincy*. I invite you to visit it under the initiatives tab at thebtscenter.org and click on the Interest form button. To stay up to date through email, go ahead and fill out the survey on the page as well to help inform our chaplaincy programming. If you are able and willing, I also want to invite you to sign up to volunteer as a Red Cross Spiritual Care team member. This position is listed under Volunteer Opportunities on the Red Cross website, which we will link in the show notes. I encourage you to at least visit the site and learn more about this opportunity. Lastly, I invite you to seek out a chaplain in your own community, sit down and have a conversation with them about the climate crisis. Figure out if volunteering as a community service chaplain might be something that you're interested in. As always, if you do any of these action steps, please feel free to share them along with this episode on your social media so that some of your friends might be inspired to do the same. There is no pressure to do any or all of these next steps. We just want these to be a resource for you as you figure out ways to engage in this huge and overwhelming topic. Thanks again Ben and Nicole for this insightful episode.

Nicole Diroff: Thank you, Anna and thank you for joining us today for this episode of the *Climate Changed Podcast*. Our guest next month is Jose Aguto. He was Executive Director of Catholic Climate Covenant and served with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the National Congress of American Indians, EPA's American Indian Environmental Office, and the 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Jose not only gave me a deeper insight into the Roman Catholic approach to climate change, but he also revealed the challenges and the incredible possibilities in organizing Catholics and the USA to embrace climate work.

Nicole Diroff: Listeners, you also have a chance to be on our next episode. We are curious about chaplain stories, hearing Terry and Alison speak about the role of chaplains. When did you experience the work of a chaplain? Was it at college, in the military, in prison, in a hospital, or elsewhere? We want to know. Tell us about your experience and if you like, add your thoughts about how chaplains can be active in the climate movement.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Or are you a chaplain yourself and you have a story to share? Feel free to text or call us. The number is 207-200-6986, plus 1 if calling from outside the USA. That number again is 207-200-6986. Or email us podcast@thebtscenter.org that's podcast@thebtscenter.org

Nicole Diroff: Our podcast is produced by Peterson Toscano and Anna Barron. Thanks Peterson and Anna. It is a project of The BTS Center in beautiful Portland, Maine.

Ben Yosua-Davis: Visit thebtscenter.org to learn more about our many in person and online programs and the resources we share. That website again is thebtscenter.org Here's hoping you're finding faith, life and love in a climate changed world.