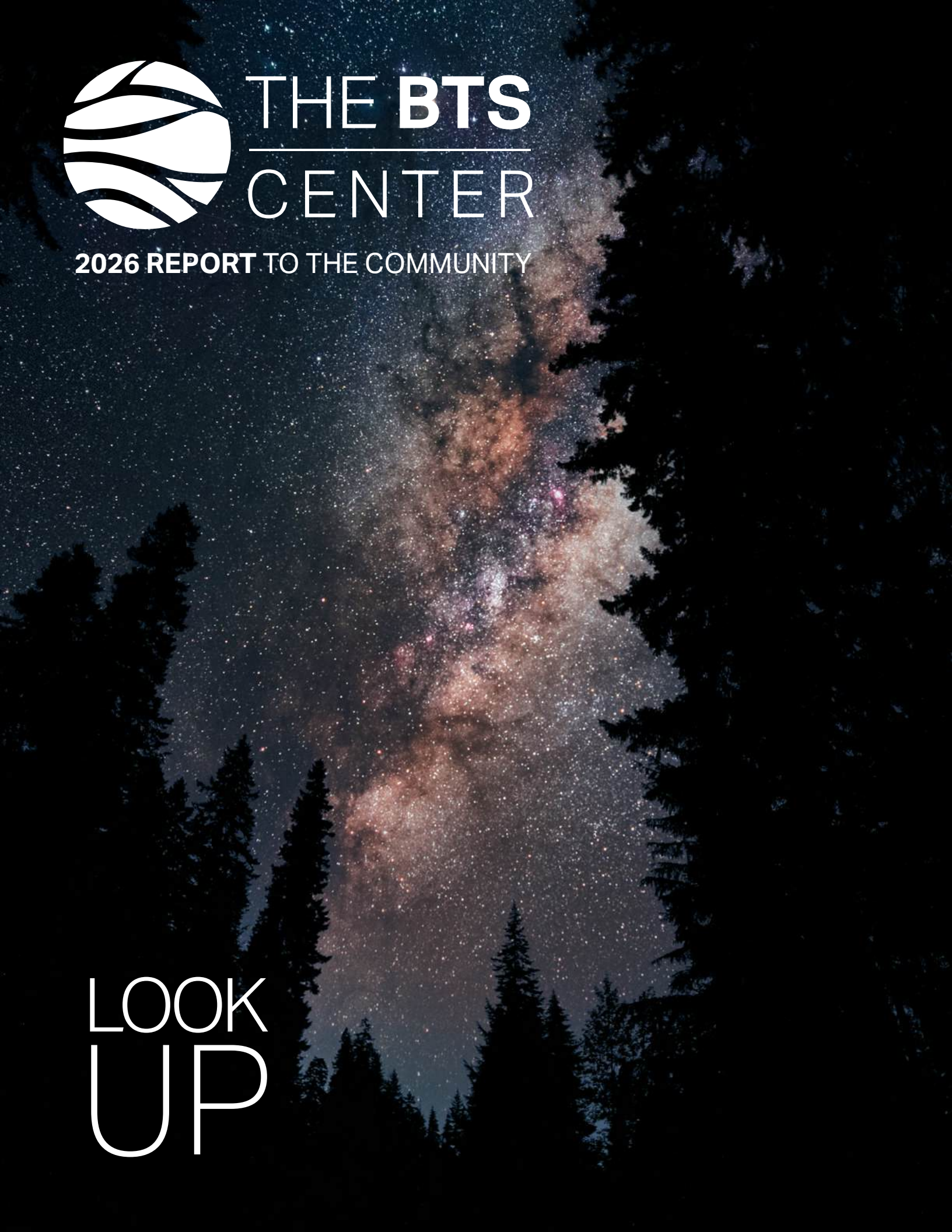
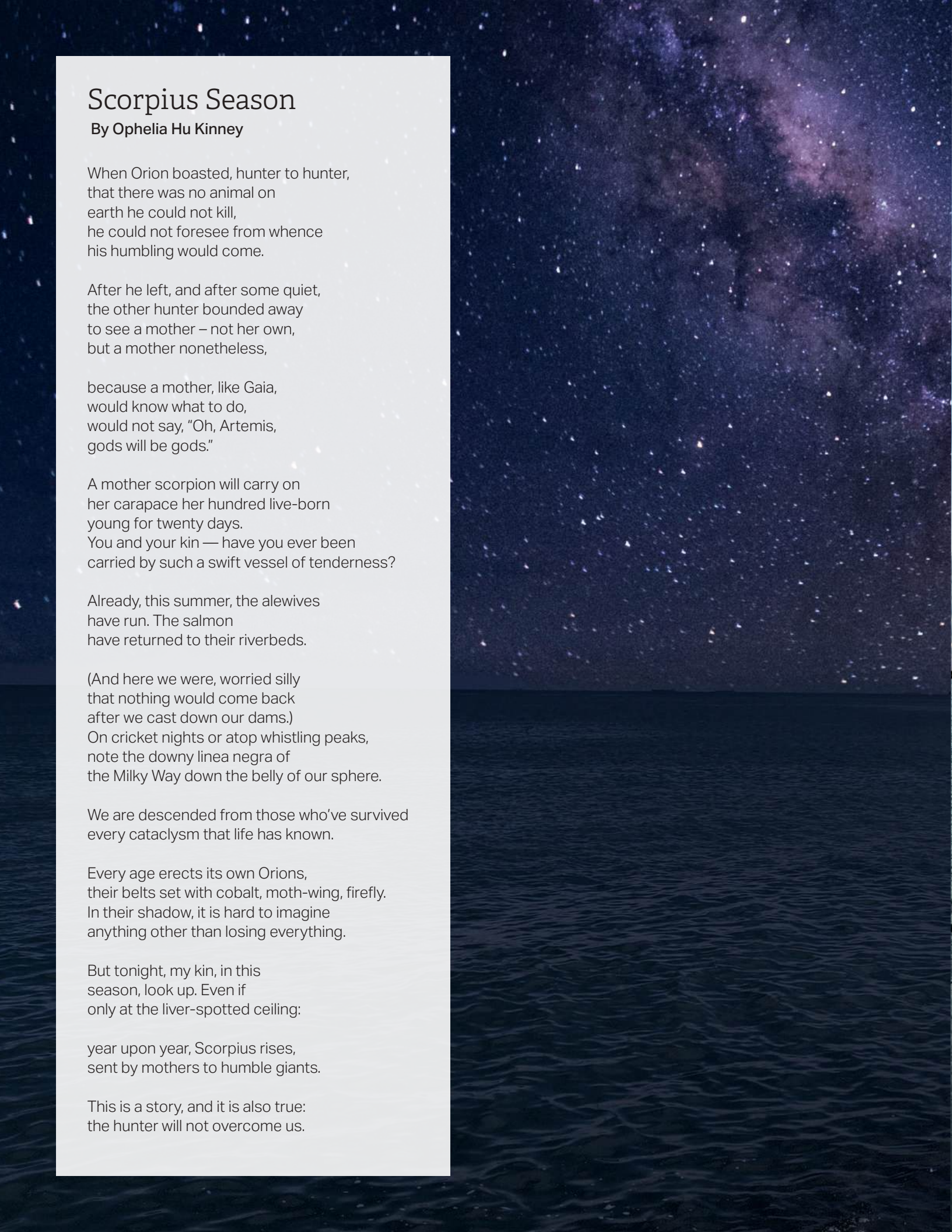


THE BTS CENTER

2026 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

LOOK UP



Scorpius Season

By Ophelia Hu Kinney

When Orion boasted, hunter to hunter,
that there was no animal on
earth he could not kill,
he could not foresee from whence
his humbling would come.

After he left, and after some quiet,
the other hunter bounded away
to see a mother – not her own,
but a mother nonetheless,

because a mother, like Gaia,
would know what to do,
would not say, "Oh, Artemis,
gods will be gods."

A mother scorpion will carry on
her carapace her hundred live-born
young for twenty days.
You and your kin — have you ever been
carried by such a swift vessel of tenderness?

Already, this summer, the alewives
have run. The salmon
have returned to their riverbeds.

(And here we were, worried silly
that nothing would come back
after we cast down our dams.)
On cricket nights or atop whistling peaks,
note the downy linea negra of
the Milky Way down the belly of our sphere.

We are descended from those who've survived
every cataclysm that life has known.

Every age erects its own Orions,
their belts set with cobalt, moth-wing, firefly.
In their shadow, it is hard to imagine
anything other than losing everything.

But tonight, my kin, in this
season, look up. Even if
only at the liver-spotted ceiling:

year upon year, Scorpius rises,
sent by mothers to humble giants.

This is a story, and it is also true:
the hunter will not overcome us.

THE BTS CENTER
2026 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

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DEAR FRIENDS:

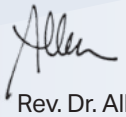
The sky over Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park is a Class 2 on the Bortle Scale for light pollution: "average dark sky." From there, where the Claiming Your Call retreat took place, we could glimpse long-ago light making its way from the center of the galaxy. (Just for comparison: Portland, where our office is located, is a Class 6: "bright suburban.")

Even in the company of boreal forest, committed spiritual leaders, and the vast Atlantic, we did not seek to escape the heaviness of our world. This retreat was a nesting site for eight congregations creatively discerning their call for a climate-changed world.

Not long before this, The BTS Center released a landmark research report that focused on the previous Claiming Your Call cohort. You'll learn more in the pages to come, but for now I'll just share this: we're seeing that collective calling invites us into a larger story – larger than the minutiae of individualism, larger than despair or optimism.

Says theologian Callid Keefe-Perry: "Vocation is a communal and justice-seeking practice. It is less about individual fulfillment and more about faithful participation in God's unfolding call toward healing, liberation, and beloved community."

I hope this Report to the Community is for you a mural on a cinderblock wall. Look up: stay alert in your spirit. Look up: stay connected to the cosmos. Look up: kinship beckons you to co-create this chapter in the story of our climate-changed world.



Rev. Dr. Allen Ewing-Merrill
Executive Director, The BTS Center

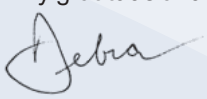
Spring always astonishes me. Birds migrating, trees greening, plants blooming, days lengthening. Even in this time of climate crisis, I find deep peace and connection to the Earth in the seasonal cycle.

Spring also brings Board changes for The BTS Center. As I complete 9 years of service and my term as Chair, I am truly excited to turn over the gavel to Rev. Dr. Andi Lloyd. I celebrate her wisdom, experience, and commitment to The BTS Center's work and look forward to the fruits of her Board leadership.

My time on the Board saw a number of challenges and opportunities. We discerned a new mission after the closure of the Bangor Theological Seminary. We faced COVID shutdowns. We completed a change in non-profit structure that required doubling staff in a year. We committed to centering justice, equity, diversity, and belonging in our work and in our organization. And we continue to navigate the difficult environment brought on by the 2024 U.S. presidential election. The BTS Center staff and Board met all this and more with creativity and collaboration, all while furthering our mission — offering programs to inspire and support spiritual leaders in this time of climate crisis.

During my term, I have learned from colleagues how to lead with gratitude for the gifts of each person; how to open questions for discussion and make space amid uncertainty while the group's collective wisdom uncovers a path forward; how to anchor decisions in our core values; how to stay open to experimentation in order to learn and improve. This is an organization that blends heart and mind, working in faith and the hope of a restored planet for all creatures.

My gratitude and best wishes for the future!



Debra Coyman
Chair, Board of Trustees

You'll find a special tribute to Debra on page 16 of this Report.

STORYTELLING LEADS US HOME TO THE WORLD: Reflecting on Convocation 2025

Storytelling allows us to touch the past and envision realities currently available to us. Recognizing the profound impact that telling our stories can have on those around us, The BTS Center chose to highlight seven storytellers at Convocation 2025, each offering personal and unique perspectives on their own "climate awakenings."

After an application process, each storyteller participated in one-to-one coaching sessions with Stellar Story Company in the weeks leading up to Convocation. Then, with power, humor, and vulnerability, each storyteller stood before the hundred-plus in-person attendees, as well as our Online Companions, to tell a climate-centered personal story — stories that moved beyond the "doom and gloom" binary to find resilience and spiritual insight in the face of a changing world. Interspersed with music, creative and contemplative immersion sessions, and spiritual practices, these stories anchored two profound days of connection and emergence. You can now revisit these stories on the Climate Changed podcast feed.

With the resonance of Convocation 2025 still echoing like the last line of a well-loved book, The BTS Center staff is now planning for Convocation 2026: Sacred Soil. In September, we will return to a one-day Convocation and a new location at The Ecology School at River Bend Farm in Saco, Maine. This remarkable site of regenerative, sustainable exploration is the perfect place to host our 2026 keynote speaker, Leah Penniman — an award-winning Black Kreyol farmer, mother, soil nerd, author, and food justice activist directing Soil Fire Farm in Grafton, NY.

Clockwise: three Convocation participants experiencing Worship in the Woods, Convocation musicians embrace, Convocation participants meet over The BTS Center table.

After Leah collaborated with us for a powerful Fall 2025 public event, we are thrilled to join with her in person.

Along with Leah's wisdom, Convocation 2026 will feature immersion sessions, hands-on learning, spiritual practice, and the deep BTS Center spirit that continues to infuse this vibrant, ever-evolving legacy program.

WHAT IF WE GET IT RIGHT?: A conversation about possibility

What if we get it right? This provocative question, and the book of that same name, formed the basis of a public event in Fall 2025, as well as a book study led by Sue Inches and Madeline Bugeau-Heartt. The author of the book — marine biologist, policy expert, and writer Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson — joined The BTS Center staff along with farmer, author, and food justice advocate Leah Penniman for a fascinating conversation focused on the pitfalls and possibilities of this climate-changed time.

Ayana and Leah brought wisdom, humor, soul, and a good dose of grounded hope into the virtual room, along with musician Reggie Harris and over a hundred attendees, for our Fall 2025 public event, *Visions of Climate Futures: An Evening with Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Leah Penniman*. The conversation took the reality of our current situation and rooted it firmly in the ground of possibility, drawing in Leah's rich knowledge of soil science, farming, and local food, as well as Ayana's background as a marine biologist and educator. Both conversationalists proclaim the primacy of joy — from digging our hands in the soil to dancing, storytelling, or breaking bread with beloveds. Through their respective disciplines of bringing forth abundance, Ayana and Leah show that joy is a necessary practice.

EcoPreacher Initiative enters its fourth year

"EcoPreacher: Compelling Preaching for a Climate Changed World" is a program partnership between Lexington Theological Seminary, The BTS Center, and Creation Justice Ministries, with support from The Lilly Endowment, Inc. The Initiative now enters its fourth year, compounding research from prior years and training another cohort of spiritual leaders who want to speak prophetically in an era of polycrisis.

Here, we're grateful to highlight Missy Smith, a participant from the 2025-2026 cohort who is returning as a Kinship Circle facilitator for this year's cohort.

" The infrastructure of environmental injustice and systemic racism was designed. The places where we live today still hold those stories. As a volunteer investing in food ministry as a form of direct activism, I know that food insecurity is the fruit of divestment.

In the EcoPreacher Cohort, we are learning about historical kinship across culture and faith. This accompanies my work toward a D.Min. in Missional Leadership at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. My scholarship and ministry are rooted in stories from the margins, elders, and the LGBTQ+ communities within those groups. A theology of kinship with the Earth and the stranger means there's no separation between the church and the world, the world and ourselves, or the past we must unearth and the future we want to harvest.

I created this illustration to support my research and ethnography. It was inspired by graphic depictions of the social determinants of health, and by the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, the father of infographics."

— Missy Smith (QueenEarth), *queenearth.com | @msqueenearth EcoPreacher Cohort 2025-2026 participant*

EcoPreachers in Their Own Words

EcoPreacher cohort participants come from a diversity of backgrounds and identities. In their own words, here is why some participants devoted a year to this community of learning.

"**As a biologist and Christian**, I am passionate about the intersection of environmentalism and theology. I am in awe of the beauty and creativity of the Lord, showcased in all of creation. There is an innate attraction in me for exploring how humanity has struggled to assimilate the call to care for creation and seek out the fullness of the Kingdom of God that is already here, although presently not fully revealed."

"**I am a trained grassroots environmental organizer** and faith leader who has struggled deeply with the connections between Christianity, land, and stewardship of creation. I am particularly interested in exploring the interconnection between non-human creation and scripture. As a preacher, I want to find a balance between pastoral preaching and prophetic preaching, as I believe that the climate crisis demands urgency, but people are often overwhelmed and feel stuck in what actions they can take."

"**I live in a vulnerable frontline community** already experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis, such as extreme heat, flooding, and poor air quality. These changes are affecting the health, safety, and livelihoods of my neighbors, especially the elderly, children, and low-income families. As both a minister and a community advocate, I feel called to use my voice, faith, and platform to educate, inspire, and mobilize others toward climate justice. I want to help my community see that caring for creation is part of God's call, and together we can protect our environment and future generations."

"**This is relevant in my context because the center of town** is in a flood zone and it has flooded twice in the past year. The smoke from wildfires in Canada is beginning to become a common summer health hazard. And my congregation includes many gardeners. While I only aspire to have gardening skills, I hope to gain the ability to preach more meaningful and moving sermons about climate change and eco justice. I also want to be able to offer better pastoral care to those impacted by natural disasters."

"**As a pastor in a mountain town** shaped by drought, wildfire, and migration, I see the urgency of preaching that addresses ecological grief, vocational dislocation, and the sacredness of place. I want to grow alongside others who are wrestling with how to proclaim good news amid collapse and change."

Claiming Your Call: research that churches can use

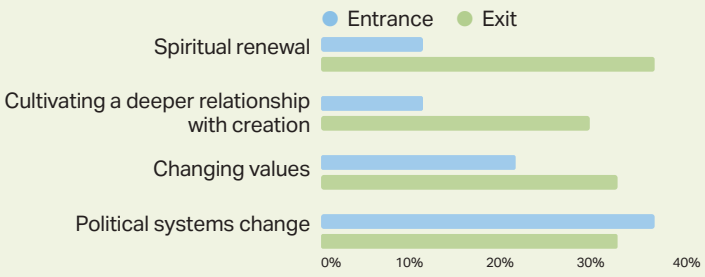
One finding from our landmark research

Through participation in the 2024-2025 cohort of Claiming Your Call, participants markedly widened their scope of potential responses to a climate-changed world. These shifts did not mean that participants entirely discarded the necessity of reducing greenhouse gas emissions or minimized the importance of technology, policy, or consumptive changes. Rather, this expanded understanding of the climate crisis gave participants additional avenues to claim their congregation's unique call in ways that were not captured by the frameworks of technology, policy, or consumption.

To learn more about what we discovered, visit: **thebtscenter.org/applied-research.**

HOW DO WE ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

Entrance and exit questionnaire responses, compared



Profile: Kim Rahebi, Ph.D.

Kim Rahebi is one of the research consultants informing and inspiring The BTS Center's applied research. We're glad to shine a light on Kim and her own research.

Kim Rahebi is standing in the research gap. She has the data to show what an eco-spiritual commitment does to human health. A public health researcher at East Texas A&M and adjunct faculty at Texas Christian University, Kim studies faith-rooted environmental engagement. She also serves as an EcoPreacher research collaborator.

Kim's research has unearthed the following outcomes for people from climate-conscious faith communities: stronger mental health, better physical health outcomes, more resilient faith, and deeper communal bonds.

Equally important is what Kim's data reveals about climate anxiety: rather than undermining well-being, anxiety about the earth's future coexists with — and may even fuel — a sense of agency. People taking action, locally and together, experience the weight of the climate crisis alongside the capacity to respond meaningfully. That, Kim suggests, is not a paradox to resolve.

Kim's conversations reveal oft-repeated simple instructions: give a damn, and do something in your own community.

2026-2027 Cohort Congregations

To the eight congregations committing to this year-long community of learning and discernment, we are grateful and hopeful for sacred alignment between divine call and response.

Cape Elizabeth United Methodist Church (Cape Elizabeth, ME)

Church of the Covenant (Boston, MA)

First Congregational Church (West Tisbury, MA)

First Congregational Church (South Portland, ME)

Mennonite Congregation of Boston (Boston, MA)

Old Cambridge Baptist Church (Cambridge, MA)

St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Brunswick, ME)

Village Church in Wellesley and Weston (Wellesley and Weston, MA)

Profile: Mennonite Congregation of Boston (MCB)

This May, Mennonite Congregation of Boston embarked as participants in the Claiming Your Call for a Climate-Changed World program. As part of the inaugural Claiming Your Call cohort in 2024, this congregation felt compelled to continue the journey of collective vocation they began two years ago by returning to engage in another year of formation.

Led by Pastor Kate André, MCB is a small, robust community with a focus on lay leadership and creation care. At the start of the 2024 Claiming Your Call program, Mennonite Congregation of Boston was grappling with feeling as if they were not doing enough to embody their ethos of care for creation. Over the course of the program, however, they embraced the "Yes, and…" perspective of the Claiming Your Call program, holding a creation-focused worship service and celebrating the ways in which so many congregants were already actively engaged in environmental justice work in their community. As they begin their second round of the Claiming Your Call program, MCB is embodying their deep commitment to more fully understand and embrace their congregation's call.

ShaSha from MCB takes a selfie of MCB members gathered outdoors

Congregational teams connect, learn, and share

ALL THAT IS WITHIN US: An uncommon research presentation

For two years, The BTS Center studied the unique role churches can play in a climate-changed world. Claiming Your Call for a Climate-Changed World was the program from which these findings arose. This examination resulted in *All That Is Within Us*, a landmark research report.

We invited the public to an uncommonly lively presentation of these findings on April 30. The well-attended evening featured opening remarks from Ben Yosua-Davis, Director of Applied Research at The BTS Center, braided with reflections from program participants, scholars, and climate practitioners who helped shape the research. All throughout, musicians Fendrick & Peck grounded attendants in song and breath.

The report offers a bracing and hopeful account of what happened when beautifully ordinary faith communities stopped waiting for a playbook from outside experts and started paying attention to what was already alive in them. It is an invitation to reframe what success looks like in the face of existential threats — to move from solution-seeking toward vocation-claiming, and from institutional anxiety toward grounded faithfulness.

Top and top left: The Schoolhouse for Simple Living by the Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship, VT.

Left: A welcoming sign at the entrance of the Chapel in the Woods at Cape Elizabeth UMC, ME.

Top right: A community forum hosted by First Congregational Church UCC in South Portland, ME.

This report comes at a time when both the church and movements for justice are searching for new sources of motivation, meaning, and staying power. The research presentation event and the findings embedded therein are our offerings to those who lead a congregation or denominational governing body, and those who simply find themselves asking what is meaningfully theirs to do in a climate-changed world.

To watch a recording of this event or learn more about the reports, visit: **thebtscenter.org/cyc-presentation**.

ON READING & WRITING

Profile: Tory Stephens

Tory Stephens is a dynamic writer, editor, creative, and connector — someone who embodies the imaginative ways of being in a climate-changed world that The BTS Center espouses. It's no wonder, then, that Tory has become a valued collaborator.

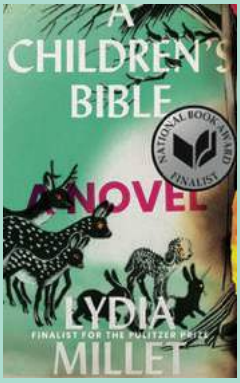
Drawing on his experience as the founder and creative manager of Imagine 2200: Climate Fiction for Future Ancestors at Grist, Tory has brought his passion and imagination for more joyful, sustainable, and life-giving futures to our Summer Fiction Book Club, the EcoPreacher Initiative, and as co-facilitator of Thrushes' Hermitage, The BTS Center's inaugural spiritual retreat for eco-writers taking place this summer.

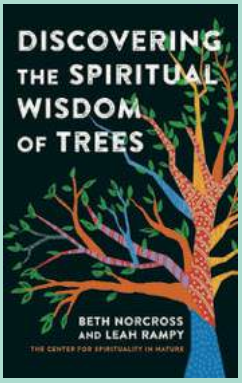
Tory has brought so much wisdom and curiosity into our work, and we are thrilled to co-conspire this new offering into being.

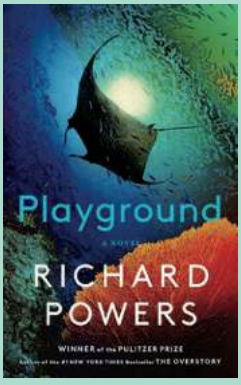
> Of the retreat, Tory says: "Thrushes' Hermitage exists at a crossing I rarely get to inhabit, where my love of wild places meets my belief that stories are how we find our way through. Co-creating this retreat with Ophelia and Ash is a reminder that the writers who will shape climate imagination need space to be still, to listen, and to find each other. I don't take that lightly."

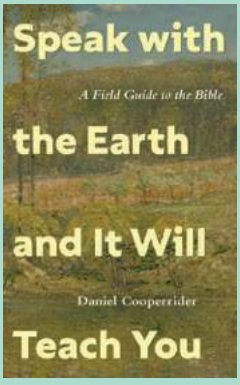
BOOKS WE READ TOGETHER THIS YEAR

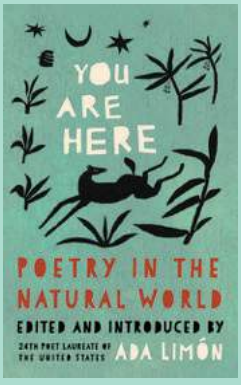
> As a former seminary, we can't help but love the power and potential in books. Here are some of the books we engaged together as a community this past year.











us bank stadium
NO MORE
BAD MATTER

Climate care within an ecology of justice

The BTS Center is firmly rooted within an intersectional community of care, recognizing that all justice issues are inextricably entwined with the climate crisis. As an organization and as individuals, we are in solidarity with immigrants, knowing that so much immigration is rooted in unstable political and economic circumstances exacerbated by climate change.

When ICE stepped up their terrorist tactics in our home watershed of Portland, Maine, in January 2026, BTS staff joined in the peaceful resistance. The BTS Center's Associate Director, Rev. Nicole Diroff, and Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Allen Ewing-Merrill, were part of a human chain that assembled each day at American Roots, a factory near Portland whose workers were being threatened. Those on the chain sang, stood guard, and offered their own bodies as protection for our vulnerable neighbors. Other staff joined a weekly prayer vigil in Portland outside ICE detention facilities.

> "When our neighbors are being targeted and traumatized," Ewing-Merrill says, "our faith compels us to show up — with acts of compassion and kindness, with words of solidarity and support, and with our bodies." He adds, "Too often we approach justice issues as if they are distinct siloes. Not so! Anytime we make our neighborhoods safer for immigrants, anytime we link arms in solidarity, anytime we advocate for the rights and protection and well-being of refugees, asylum seekers, or undocumented people in our communities, we are doing the work of climate justice."

Rev. Karen Hutt preaching

In that spirit, dear friends in The BTS Center's network participated in the circles of care in Minneapolis during the brutal ICE occupation of that city. Our friend and collaborator Rev. Liz Fulmer traveled from Pennsylvania to Minneapolis to lend her song-leading and organizing skills. Former Board Member Rev. Dr. Jim Gertmenian returned to his longtime home in Minnesota to be of service. The BTS Center's Climate Chaplaincy advisor Rev. Karen Hutt, who lives just a block from where Renée Good was executed by an ICE agent, gave the eulogy at Good's funeral.

Immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and the descendants of those who immigrated or were enslaved are part of the same ecology. Although those in power are orchestrating a reign of violence and cruelty, the human community is strengthened by diversity like any other ecosystem. We are grateful to be a part of your ecosystem, your canopy of care for our climate-changed world.

Background photo: Demonstrators participate in a rally during an "ICE Out" day of protest on January 23, 2026 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Stephen Maturen / Stringer via Getty Images

Left: Rev. Dr. James Gertmenian was among 12 arrested attempting to deliver food and personal items to the detainees at the ICE detention facility in Burlington, MA.

Right: Rev. Liz Fulmer, in a baseball cap, leads Singing Resistance in Lancaster, PA.

A dynamic fourth season of Climate Changed

Becoming more human in a more-than-human world

Following three seasons co-hosted by Ben Yosua-Davis (Director of Applied Research) and Rev. Nicole Diroff (Associate Director), The BTS Center's podcast, *Climate Changed*, has a new host on board. Autumn Brown, an artist, facilitator, mother, musician, and theologian based in Minneapolis, has joined Nicole as the co-host for Season Four — a season exploring what it means to become more human in a more-than-human world.

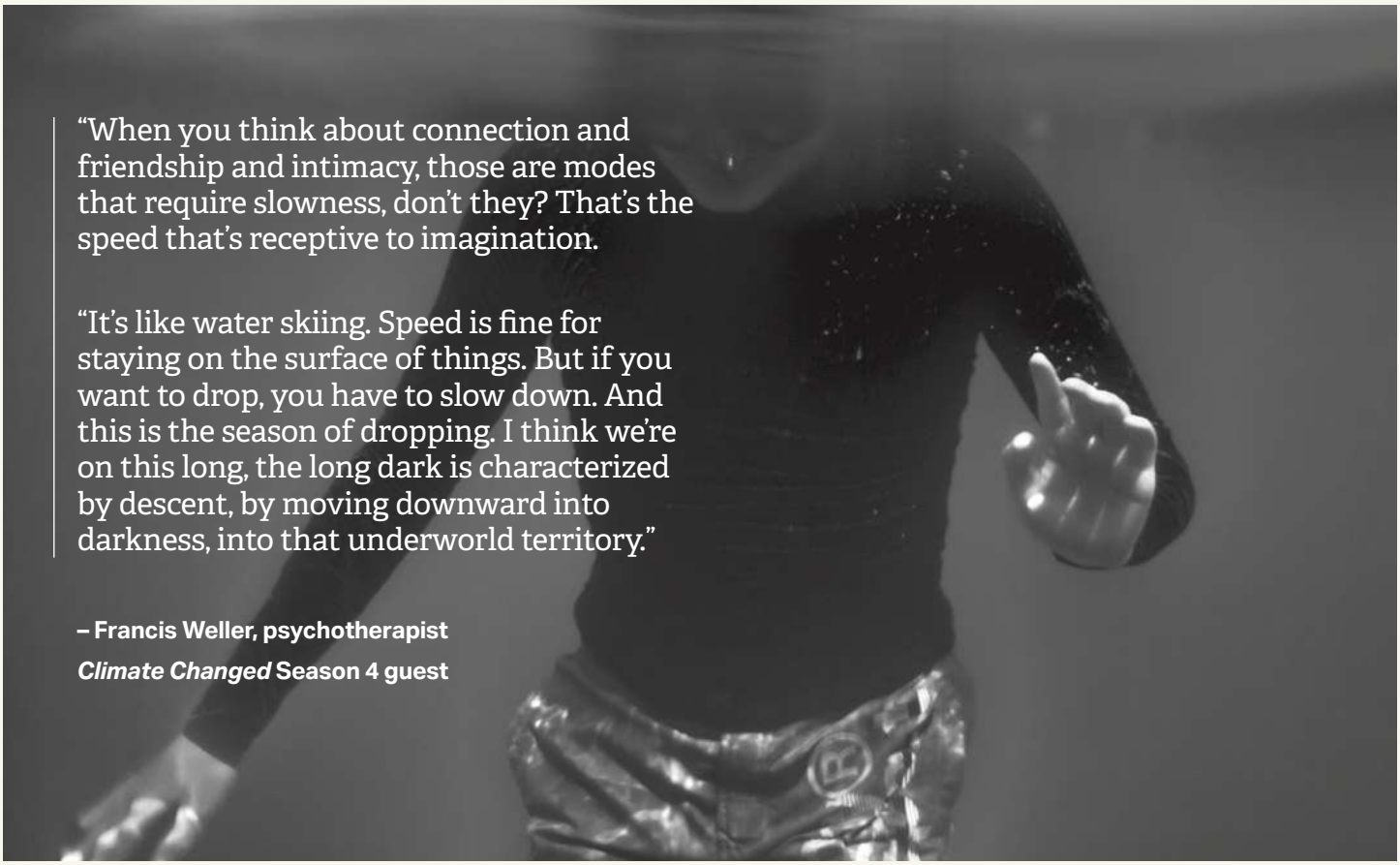
Through conversations with five illustrious guests as well as soulful, playful conversations with one another, Autumn and Nicole take listeners on journeys of discovery and depth. This season's guests are:

- **Tory Stephens**: climate fiction author and editor
  If hope is a muscle, then how do I build it?
- **Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner**: climate chaplain
  If I can't fix climate grief, then what can I do instead?
- **Norma Wong**: Zen Master, Indigenous Hawaiian educator, and author
  What constitutes "human being-ness" during ecological crisis?
- **Rev. Katie Mears**: disaster response expert
  What do disasters reveal about human nature?
- **Francis Weller**: psychotherapist and author
  What if it doesn't get better anytime soon?

As co-host, Autumn brings her many years of community organizing, spiritual practice, and justice work into her conversations. She challenges us to re-imagine our current realities and honor the importance of grief, joy, and deep love in our relationships with the more-than-human world.

Autumn also brings a deep well of podcast-hosting wisdom, having co-hosted *How to Survive the End of the World* with her sister, adrienne marie brown, over the past nine years. Autumn's voice and perspective are vital, and we are delighted to have her as part of the *Climate Changed* podcast team.

Climate Changed continues to be produced by the incomparable Peterson Toscano and supported by the staff of The BTS Center.



> "When you think about connection and friendship and intimacy, those are modes that require slowness, don't they? That's the speed that's receptive to imagination.
>
> "It's like water skiing. Speed is fine for staying on the surface of things. But if you want to drop, you have to slow down. And this is the season of dropping. I think we're on this long, the long dark is characterized by descent, by moving downward into darkness, into that underworld territory."

– Francis Weller, psychotherapist
***Climate Changed* Season 4 guest**

Befriending the soul of place

Watershed is a fluid identity, a location-interlocution without boundaries. That makes it difficult to say exactly where and to whom we belong when we talk about inhabiting a watershed. And perhaps that difficulty is the point. Much of The BTS Center's programming takes place online, where participants exchange inspiration and learning from and for their own watersheds. And some of our gatherings are bound by location — the North American northeast or Maine.

> From Rev. Alice Mann, an Episcopal priest from Massachusetts, we learned the language and posture of "befriending the soul of place." Place, she maintains, is "embodied and particular" — a co-conspirator in its own life story.

At The BTS Center, we've had the opportunity to practice befriending our watersheds and their neighboring lands. We began the calendar year with an invitation from our friend Glenn Page, Executive Director of COBALT (the Collaborative for Bioregional Action Learning & Transformation) and Team Zostera. COBALT and Team Zostera convened scientists and religious leaders for a day-long "seagrass hackathon." The event was a forum of cross-pollination, in which people and organizations with diverse missions gathered on behalf of seagrass meadows — a keystone ecosystem we are fortunate to abut here in Casco Bay. In an evolution of partnership, COBALT and The BTS Center are now collaborating on a Seagrass & Spirituality Community of Practice.

The soul of place is a key component of Claiming Your Call for a Climate-Changed World, where participating congregations are learning to listen for and lean into their place-based calling. The research borne from the program's last cohort revealed that congregations tended to engage the soul of their place when they discerned their place in a climate-changed world.

We continued to advocate for kinship with place at this year's Green Teams Gathering. In May, we gathered spiritual leaders from Maine congregations to reckon with the history of place — in particular, systemic violence against the Indigenous peoples of this watershed. Only by ceding a spirit of conquest, we believe, is a spirit of justice possible.

Profile: Foreside Community Church

Sharing the same beautiful Casco Bay watershed, Foreside Community Church in Falmouth, Maine, has been a dynamic partner to The BTS Center for some time. As the home church of our outgoing Board Chair, Debra Coyman, as well as many individuals involved in our programs, Foreside is a congregation actively living out its call across many ministries.

Sue Clark of Foreside Community Church has been a driving force behind The BTS Center's Green Teams Gathering, an annual opportunity for those engaged in creation care and environmental ministry in New England to gather and learn together.

With enthusiasm and encouragement, Foreside's Green Team has recognized the importance of sharing ideas and resources across congregations through an in-person convening — as well as hosting ecologically-themed worship and book studies for their community. Foreside Community Church is an inspiring example of a congregation not only engaged in creation-focused work but also building networks of care and commitment to place.

All photos are from Foreside Community Church's website, taken of congregants on the church grounds.

PRACTICING TRUTH: Art and resistance for a climate-changed world

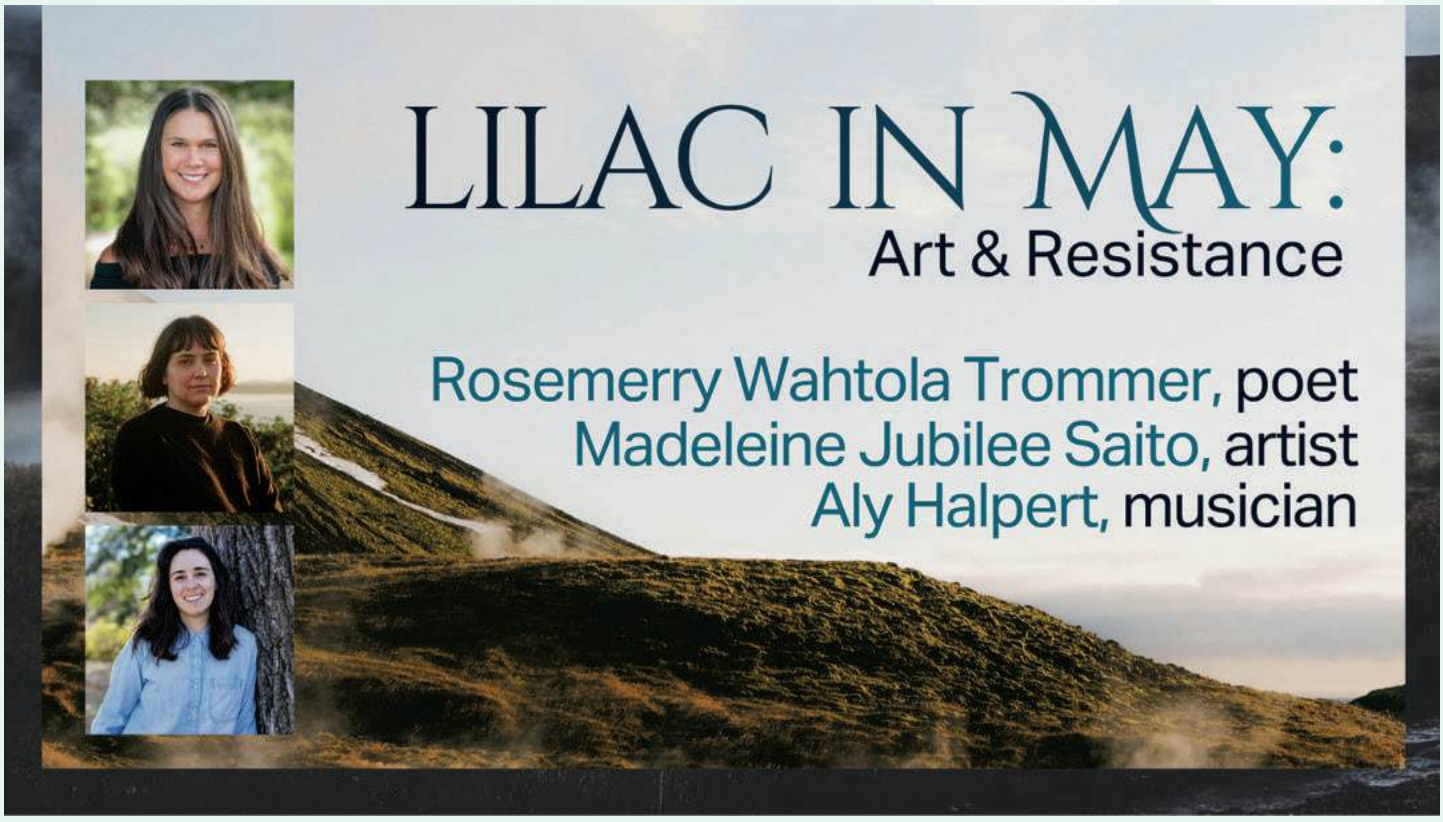
> "You might not know this, but poems are like trees... They let us breathe together. In each line break, caesura, and stanza, there's a place for us to breathe."
>
> — Ada Limón, from the introduction of *You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World*

With an ever-increasing pace of life and new crises confronting us each day, finding space to pause, to deepen, can feel like a luxury. Yet when we gift ourselves the space, life-giving practices of resistance and renewal emerge.

This spring, The BTS Center focused two programs on different aspects of creative practice and resistance. Poetry + The Prophetic Voice: A Book Study facilitated by Rev. Eileen Gebbie and Rev. Ash Temin led participants into contemplative practice and conversation centered on the text *You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World*, edited by Ada Limón. The poems from this contemporary anthology of nature-based works were woven with prophetic framing from theologian Walter Brueggemann and others, creating a rich scaffolding for exploring reality, grief, and hope in a climate-changed world.

In the midst of Poetry + The Prophetic Voice, we held our spring event, Lilac in May: Art & Resistance. This gathering featured poet Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer, visual artist Madeleine Jubilee Saito, and musician Aly Halpert, who invoked the power of poetry, art, and song to nourish our souls for the work of justice in this aching world. Aly led us in vibrant song, Rosemerry shared some of her gorgeous original work, and Madeleine unveiled a climate comic commissioned by The BTS Center. And, in conversation with one another and with those gathered, the depth and profundity of these three artists' wisdom truly emerged and shone.

With joy, grief, compassion, and challenge: both programs impelled participants to engage creativity as an instrumental practice for a climate-changed world.



With gratitude for a visionary leader

When Debra Coyman joined The BTS Center's Board of Trustees in 2017, the organization had just navigated a season of seismic change. Just four years prior, its 200-year tenure as Bangor Theological Seminary, a beloved institution of higher education, had come to an end, and The BTS Center was in a nascent stage. At a time when many were wading through questions about the future, Debra jumped right into the babbling stream of possibility, bringing wisdom, a strategic mind, good humor, and a deep commitment to the values that first inspired the organization's founding.

Over nine years of faithful service, Debra has provided invaluable leadership through a remarkable period of reimagination and transformation. She has strengthened governance, advanced strategic priorities, asked compelling questions, and supported new initiatives — thus steering The BTS Center through a major transition with clarity of vision, purpose, and programmatic focus. During this time, Debra has offered significant leadership as Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and most recently, two years as Board Chair. All who have served with her — Board colleagues and staff alike — have benefited from her generosity, integrity, and steadfast leadership.

> "As Debra completes her final term on this Board," says Rev. Dr. Allen Ewing-Merrill, The BTS Center's Executive Director, "we honor her with deep gratitude for her loving dedication to this work and for the enduring contributions she has made, which will continue to shape The BTS Center's work for years to come."

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Tim Wilkins, Treasurer

Elizabeth Parsons, PhD, Secretary

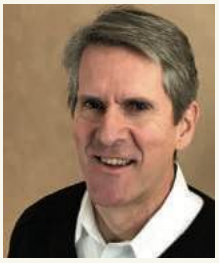
Rev. June Cooper

Debra Coyman, outgoing Chair

Natasha DeJarnett, PhD

Rev. Eric Elnes, PhD

Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz



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... and a gifted team of program consultants, research advisors, and spiritual directors who develop, lead, support, and facilitate the many programs of The BTS Center

Our Partners

We belong to a constellation of organizations responding to a climate-changed world. We're grateful to have collaborated with the following partners this past year:

Anabaptist Climate Collaborative • Atlantic Black Box • Blessed Tomorrow • Catholic Climate Covenant • Center for Earth Ethics • Center for Ecological Regeneration • The Center for Spirituality in Nature • Chaplaincy Innovation Lab • Citizens' Climate Lobby • Climate Psychiatry Alliance • Climate Psychology Alliance – North America • COBALT (Collaborative for Bioregional Action Learning and Transformation) • Creation Justice Ministries • The Damascus Project • Dayenu • The Episcopal Diocese of Maine • Good Grief Network • Grist • Lake Stewards of Maine • Leave No Trace • Lexington Theological Seminary • Lutherans Restoring Creation • Maine Conference, United Church of Christ • Maine Council of Churches • Maine Farmland Trust • The Many • MOFGA (The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association) • Pilgrim Lodge Summer Camp & Retreat Center • The Poetry Clinic • PRINT: A Bookstore • Radical Joy for Hard Times • Schoodic Institute • Stellar Story Company • Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ • The Teller's Garden • Third Act Maine • United Church of Christ • Wabanaki Alliance • Waterspirit • Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment

You are invited!

Yes — you! As we continue to focus on spiritual leadership for a climate-changed world — as we aim to catalyze spiritual imagination with enduring wisdom for transformative faith leadership — we are grateful for our many friends, program participants, partners, and donors, and we extend a warm invitation to join in this work.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Visit **thebtscenter.org** and explore Upcoming Programs.
- Check out our podcast Climate Changed, Leadership Commons, and Video Library — all at **thebtscenter.org** — for resources you can use within your faith community or for your own spiritual nourishment.
- Support the work of The BTS Center with a financial gift. We are grateful for your support.
- Share our website or this report with a friend or colleague who may be interested in the work of The BTS Center.

With Enduring Gratitude

We are grateful for the financial support of the following individuals and organizations.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please email info@thebtscenter.org with any errors or omissions.

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Artist Profile

We're deeply grateful for this comic that Madeleine Jubilee Saito created for The BTS Center and unveiled during our 2026 spring event, Lilac in May. It captures the thoughtful and urgent hope that flows through the work of so many of you engaging with a climate-changed world. Some of the elements that inspired this comic include:

"Because," by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

The Jewish and Christian scripture, Isaiah 40:6

"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," by Walt Whitman

Learn more about this artist's work, including her beautiful collection, *You Are a Sacred Place: Visual Poems for Living in Climate Crisis*, at **madeleinejubileesaito.net**.

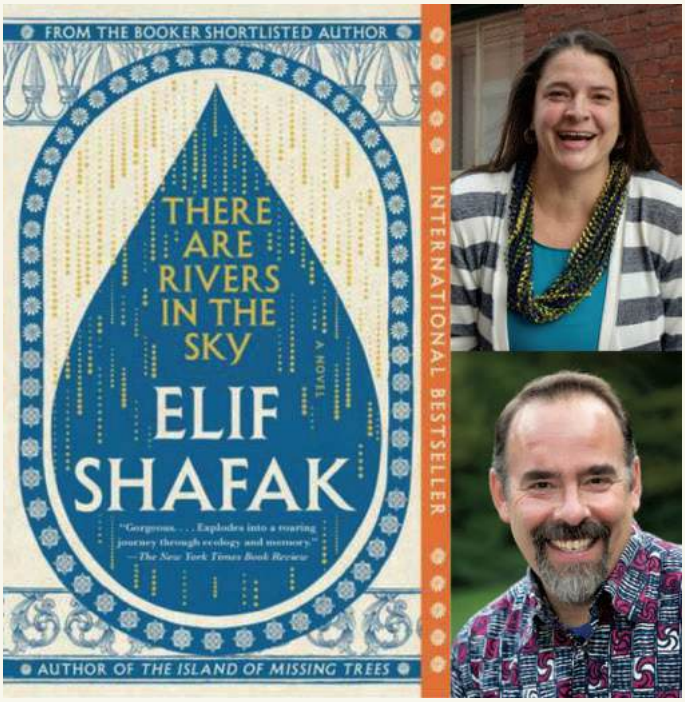
"Being present to our alive-ness is the opposite of despair. As we feel our own alive-ness, we feel the aliveness of all other beings. Art, nature, community, our sacred traditions – all draw us into an awareness of our alive-ness and our interconnection with all beings, and they strengthen and ground us for resistance."

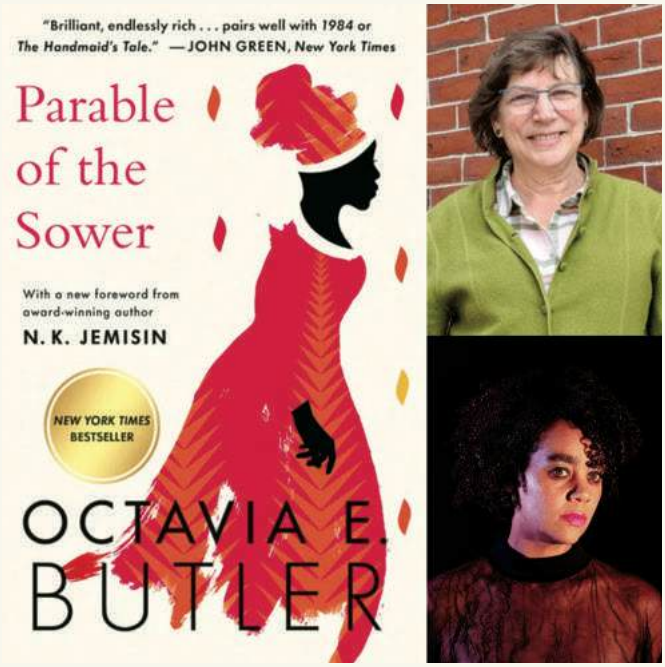
— Madeleine Jubilee Saito, illustrator, cartoonist, and climate activist

Join Us In Person and Online

Upcoming Events and Programs

As we embrace the slower program rhythms of the summer, we are already anticipating beautiful offerings for our community in the months ahead. Here's what's coming up at The BTS Center.





Summer Fiction Book Club • July and August Sessions

Thursday, July 23 • 11:30am - 1:00pm ET • Online

With Rev. Nicole Diroff and Glenn Page discussing

There Are Rivers in the Sky by Elif Shafak

Thursday, August 27 • 11:30am - 1:00pm ET • Online

With Rev. Alison Cornish and Autumn Brown discussing

The Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

More information at: **thebtscenter.org/fiction**

Justice Together Camp: Climate, Identity, and Community

One Thursday per month, September – June

A year-long program of robust education and community support for preachers seeking to integrate or sharpen their climate-conscious, justice-centered preaching.

More information at: **thebtscenter.org/ecopreacher-cohort-2026-2027**

Convocation 2026: Sacred Soil

Friday, September 18 • 9:30am – 5:30pm

The Ecology School at River Bend Farm • Saco, Maine

Food justice and climate justice spring from the same sacred soil. Who gets to eat well, who tends the land, and who bears the weight of a changing climate are questions bound together by history, race, class, and power. Come explore this living intersection together at The Ecology School at River Bend Farm in Saco, Maine, where beauty, education, and nourishment meet. We'll ground ideas and values in practice with our hands, our bodies, and the soil beneath our feet.

Keynote speaker Leah Penniman, co-founder and farm director at Soul Fire Farm, is a mother, activist, author, scientist, earth-lover, and African Traditional Priest who has been tending the soil and organizing for a racially just food system for 30 years.

More information at: **Convocation2026.org**

Climate Changed Podcast, Season 4

A podcast about becoming more human in a more-than-human world hosted by Rev. Nicole Diroff and Autumn Brown

ClimateChangedPodcast.org

To learn more about each of these programs and more, visit: **thebtscenter.org/engage**

OUR MISSION:

To catalyze spiritual imagination with enduring wisdom for transformative faith leadership

OUR VISION:

Human hearts renewed, justice established, and creation restored

THE **BTS** CENTER

Spiritual Leadership for a Climate-Changed World

97 India Street
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