



Green Notes

Green Note, April 22 2026: Earth Day turns 56 today

April 22nd, is Earth Day. Today, Earth Day is a global event, but it started through the efforts of individuals and small groups.

The first Earth Day was a 1970 initiative of US Senator Gaylord Nelson and Denis Hayes. Hayes was a student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard Kennedy School) who dropped out to help organize the grass-roots nonprofit that planned the first Earth Day as a nationwide rally. Hayes had been raised near a Washington State paper mill that poured uncontrolled pollution into the Columbia River, in a town that was known as the "the place that stinks." Nelson had grown up in Wisconsin well aware of conservation issues, but was galvanized in 1969 by a trip to Santa Barbara, California, where a gigantic oil spill was spreading up and down the west coast, killing thousands of birds in the process. At that time other catastrophic events were also raising environmental awareness, including the heavily polluted Cuyahoga River (Ohio) which actually caught fire multiple times, attracting national media attention.

These environmental disasters added urgency to a movement that was already under way, following the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*. An impetus for *Silent Spring* was a letter written in 1958 by a friend of Carson's to the Boston Herald describing the death of birds around her property, that resulted from the aerial spraying of DDT to kill mosquitoes. The letter prompted Carson to turn her attention to researching and publicizing the dangers of chemical pesticides. She died of breast cancer on April 14, 1964 at age 56, but despite suffering her debilitating illness and fierce attacks from the chemical industry, she continued to speak out against the dangers of pesticides to the end of her life. Her book had a profound and lasting international impact, including in Canada.

In Canada, too, the early 1970s marked milestones in raising environmental awareness. In 1969 University of Toronto students and professors launched an organization, Pollution Probe, to advocate for environmental action, with a mock funeral for the then highly polluted Don River. The activist organization Greenpeace evolved out of the Don't Make A Wave Committee (DMAWC), a 1969 Vancouver group created to oppose nuclear testing in the Aleutian Islands. In 1971 a crew supported by DMAWC chartered a vessel with the goal of sailing into the test site. The boat was intercepted, but the publicity helped lead to the US abandoning further nuclear tests. In 1971, David Suzuki, perhaps Canada's most well-known environmental advocate, began a weekly television show for children call Suzuki on Science. Other radio and television programmes followed, and from 1979 to 2023 he hosted on TV "The Nature of Things," in which he pointed out threats to human well-being and wildlife habitat, and present alternatives to humanity for achieving a more sustainable society.

On Thursday 7 December 1972, astronaut Harrison Schmitt's photo taken from Apollo 17 gave humanity our first look at our planet as a whole. Schmitt said, "If there ever was a fragile-appearing piece of blue in space, it's the Earth right now." Seeing the "Blue Marble" in this way changed how we think of the Earth, our home.

On April 19th, St Hilda's marked Earth Day with Creation Care Sunday and a service in which our Rector, Jim Mathes, called us to a "renewed commitment as stewards of God's wondrous creation." We expressed our commitment through the liturgy, Diane Marshall's Prayers of the People, Katherine Hume's choices of music, and Green Parish Action Team (GPAT) member Mike Starr's inspiring and eloquent sermon. The Bulletin cover featured

a photo (RH above) taken from Artemis II during its journey around the moon earlier this month that recalled the 1972 Blue Marble (LH above), and contained an insert, "20 Ways to Care for Creation on the Sunshine Coast," which I am attaching below. GPAT plans to put an extended and evolving version of this on the St Hilda's website, with the hope that we will all find it helpful in maintaining our creation care commitment.

Many individuals and organizations over many years have helped humanity bring creation care to the forefront of our minds, and it will take the collaboration of many more individuals and organizations to keep it there. Let's continue our efforts as best we can, together, and with God's help.

Christine

[20 Ways to Care for Creation on the Sunshine Coast](#)

1. Good news: the forsythia at foot of the bell tower right by one of our new heat pumps is in bloom—a joyful sign of spring, despite this week's blustery atmospheric river.

We have good news about the heat pumps, too. The 2026 January/February hydro bill shows a very welcome drop of about 40% in our cost and emissions from the same period in 2025, even taking into account any differences between the two periods in weather conditions. We expect that our electricity consumption will continue to decrease as we turn off more baseboard heaters and get protocols in place for operating the heat pumps. Bruce Pond and Mike Starr are working on the protocols—many thanks to them for this, and for all their work on getting the heat pumps installed.

2. Name change! St Hilda's has long benefitted from members' actions in caring for the environment, so when the Green Parish Action Group formed in 2021 it was building on an established tradition. We didn't give much thought to adopting the name GPAG, but it seemed to work—until now! It turns out that the Sunshine Coast has another GPAG: the Gibsons Public Art Gallery, and they even have their own domain name: <https://gpag.ca/>.



To prevent confusion, we are changing our name to Green Parish Action Team, or GPAT. Since we often refer to ourselves as the “Green Team” anyway, this small but vital change seems to make sense, and we hope you agree.

3. Climate Hushing. You will surely have noticed how the climate emergency has dropped out of much public discourse these days.

As business professor Anjali Chaudhry writes, the science on the climate emergency points unequivocally to “its impacts affecting ecosystems, food systems, migration patterns, supply chains, financial markets, and geopolitical stability itself.” Chaudhry goes on, “And yet this year,” at the World Economic Forum in January 2026 “attention shifted toward issues that are undeniably urgent but, one may argue are derivative of or amplified by climate risk [emphasis mine]. The silence on climate underscores a sobering reality: even when global leaders convene under a banner of dialogue, it remains the hardest conversation—precisely because it requires confronting deep value conflicts, political pressure, and uncomfortable tradeoffs (see her article at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/anjlichaudhry/2026/01/24/davos-leaders-silence-on-climate-speaks-volumeswhy-this-is-a-risk/>).

Canadian climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe calls this silence “climate hushing” (“[Climate hushing](https://www.talkingclimate.ca)”—the quiet trend undermining global climate action [talkingclimate.ca](https://www.talkingclimate.ca)) and points out that at such a time as this, having conversations about climate change is more important than ever. To get started on these hard conversations, Katharine recommends beginning “with common ground - rather than where we typically begin our conversations, with something we disagree with them about, or something we’re worried about and we don’t think they are (but they should be). Those types of conversations rarely go well. Instead, a great place to begin is by focusing on how climate

change is affecting a place you both live in, care about, or visit often. Shared experiences make the issue feel real and relevant. You can mention one of the crazy weather events that happened this year . . . then bring in some of the other changes that have been happening [on the Sunshine Coast], and how they are affecting people’s homes, livelihoods, or health.”

Such as . . .

4. Climate resilience on the Sunshine Coast and in BC

Based on reports from the District of Sechelt and the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD), our main local climate vulnerabilities include:

- Coastal flooding and sea level rise
- Water shortages and drought
- Extreme rainfall and storms
- Wildfire risk and air quality
- Geotechnical hazards
- Impacts on infrastructure and ecosystems

Katharine Hayoe’s most recent Talking Climate newsletter showcases "Indigenous-led Ocean Protection in Canada, and specifically talks about British Columbia: <https://www.talkingclimate.ca/p/indigenous-led-ocean-protection-in>. She says, “Protecting coastal ecosystems on land and in the ocean builds climate resilience for both people and nature.” This comment fits nicely with a *Coast Reporter* article from this week on an even more local effort: https://www.coastreporter.net/in-the-community/waters-of-kalpilinpender-harbour-come-alive-with-herring-spawn-11998096#google_vignette.

In future Green Notes we will be talking more about our local climate resilience, and what groups—municipal, commercial, and non-profit—are doing to reduce our vulnerabilities. Talking with others about these efforts can be a way in which we break the current silence and help make our voices heard.

Joining a prayer vigil can help do that too.

5. Prayer Vigils for Climate Justice: As you will have seen in our recent Sunday Bulletins, on Tuesdays during Lent February 24-March 31, the BC Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (including our friend Louis Giguere of Living Faith Lutheran Church) is organizing a prayer vigil at 5pm Pacific time for 30 minutes by Zoom. You can find out more, and a registration link, here: <https://bcsynod.org/events/prayer-vigils-for-climate-justice-lent-2026/2026-03-10> and also see the poster in the breezeway.

With thanks to everyone for your concern and support, and for your help in keeping the climate emergency to the forefront of our attention,

Christine

