

Homily Offered by Phil Favero

At the Eagle Harbor Congregational Church

Bainbridge Island, Washington

April 27, 2025

Good morning, Friends and Neighbors,

My name is Philip Favero, and I live just up Madison Avenue from here, in the Grow Community. My professional training is in natural resource economics. I'm a member of the local Quaker Meeting, Agate Passage Friends, and of the Bainbridge Island/North Kitsap County Interfaith Climate Circle. Prior to my arrival on Bainbridge Island in 2018, while living in Annapolis, Maryland, I co-founded an interfaith group for education and advocacy called the "Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis." I appreciate the invitation from Pastor Eisenhauer to speak with you today and the warm hospitality provided by Jim Macpherson. It's an honor to represent the Interfaith Climate Circle in your faith community.

Before my homily, let's silently hold in the Light Signore Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis, who passed through the thin veil of life this past week. Francis taught respect for science, empathy for the poor and the marginalized, and intimate connection with and responsibility for all of God's creation. ... Thank you, Francis. Thank you, Friends.

Regarding climate change and other public issues of this moment, we are like the proverbial frog, swimming in a pot of tepid water that is heating up toward the boiling point. We face two questions: **When should we jump? And where should we land?**

To think about when to jump, let's consider four facts about climate change:

First, global warming is real. Since 1800, early in the Industrial Age, the average temperature on the Earth's surface has risen by 1.1 degrees Celsius, about 2 degrees Fahrenheit. Rising temperatures on Earth are not unprecedented; our planet has experienced many periods of heating and

cooling. The current warming is unusually rapid, however, making it difficult for organisms to adapt to rising temperatures. For this and other reasons, the Earth is now experiencing a mass extinction of life.

Second, humans are the primary cause of our planet's warming. We power products of the Industrial Age – our cars, airplanes, lawnmowers, furnaces, electric grids, and so forth – primarily by burning fossil fuels: coal; oil; and natural gas. A byproduct of fossil fuel combustion is carbon dioxide (CO₂). In 1859, British scientist John Tyndall found evidence that when carbon dioxide is present in the Earth's atmosphere, it traps heat. For the last 160 years, scientists have confirmed this so-called “greenhouse gas effect” whereby we are heating the Earth. Scientists tell us that the current level of atmospheric CO₂ is more than 422 parts per million, higher than it has been for at least the past 800,000 years.

Third, the warming Earth is an increasingly dangerous place to live. We are seeing early impacts of global warming: rising sea levels that flood low-lying coastal regions; regional droughts; more and longer heatwaves; more and larger wildfires; declining air quality; and intensified hurricanes, to name the obvious. Impacts of a warming climate are particularly dangerous for the world's **poor** – people who live in vulnerable places and are unable to move from harm's way. Impacts will fall soon on the world's **voiceless** – children and the yet unborn. Climate change presents a fundamental and growing threat to human health and well being.

Fourth, climate change is an urgent matter. We do not have the luxury of delaying the work of mitigating global warming. Climate change involves a complex system that includes various amplifying feedback effects. Such effects include, for example: (1) thawing permafrost, which releases carbon dioxide from decaying plant and animal materials; (2) melting ice and snow fields, which lay bare soils and seas, exposing them to the sun's warmth instead of reflecting sunlight back into space; and (3) warming oceans, which reduce seawater's ability to absorb carbon. In all these examples and other amplifying feedback effects in the climate system, the warmer the Earth

becomes, the even warmer she becomes. We are increasingly at risk of losing our ability to manage global warming. The longer we wait, the more challenging climate change becomes.

I'm convinced, and hope you are too, that we frogs **should jump now**.

But where should we land?

Currently, the Federal Administration is reducing America's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, encouraging more fossil fuel production, eliminating clean energy investments, abandoning climate research, and abdicating America's role as an international climate leader. These misdeeds increase the risks of a climate catastrophe, but they are also part of a larger pattern. The current Administration is, in addition, attacking the rule of law, health science, child nutrition, academic freedom, and other qualities of American democracy, creativity, and decency.

Despite the fear of attacks on their reputations, finances, electability, and personal and family safety, a few courageous people, but more people every day, are creating a "Movement" to resist authoritarianism and to work toward a safer, more peaceful, more equitable world. People of various political and religious persuasions, for a variety of reasons, climate change included, are joining the Movement. That Movement, I believe, is where we frogs should land. That is where we will find the leaders, ourselves included, for whom we have been seeking.

Once we identify with the Movement, we can contribute our personal gifts for doing art, making music, authoring communications, organizing groups, and many others. We can engage our civic, neighborhood, and social communities to encourage them to join the Movement too. We can, in the words of Congressman John Lewis, quote, "Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and redeem the Soul of America."

As people of faith, you and I can contribute two important convincements to the Movement. First, we bring **deep compassion**: an intense concern for justice and care for the poor, the powerless, and all of creation. Second, we

bring **enduring hope**. The Easter Story, which Christians celebrated last week, is about Jesus, yes; but it is also a story about us. We believe that, eventually, by making good trouble, as led by the Divine Spirit, we will emerge from the darkness of our time. Our suffering and work will not be in vain. In the end, by helping to form a Movement of truth and love, we shall overcome. God bless you. God bless America. And God bless our Mother Earth.
