

What a wonderful world indeed. It's Earth Day once again. The one day of the year we especially remind ourselves that we rely on Mother Earth for our very existence and appreciate what a wonderful place it is that we thrive in. Today, I hope to bring the

news of how our climate crisis is progressing. Some very good, some bad, and some ugly. And, most important to Unitarians, what you can do about it. Climate science is complex and won't be discussed here. Katherine Hayhoe, a climate scientist sums it up in 10 words. "It's real, It's us. Experts agree. It's bad. There's hope".

You will see up on the screen, a series of news items about the climate crisis. I am not going to bore you with reading them, I am hopeful that you can absorb them and listen at the same time. Don't worry about the details. Our brains are marvelous with amazing multitasking abilities!

The list of climate related impacts is long; locally we had the horrible summer of firestorms resulting in Litton and so much else burning down, torrential rains that wiped out all the roads leading out of Vancouver and Victoria; a heat dome that impacted so many; just last Christmas we had a snow storm that wreaked havoc on travellers and supply chains again and simple things like garbage pickup were long delayed; children's Tylenol was not available, and some pharmacies were running out of supplies. Our civilization is fragile. One freighter gets stuck in the Suez Canal and supply chains are hugely affected world wide.

Our world is in a dire way. We are just at the beginning of climate change with stronger storms, longer droughts and a shift in seasons that will have a huge negative effect on crops, famine, and infrastructure. The world is currently trying to deal with 100 million refugees but that is expected to increase 10-fold. We have recently heard of some 40,000 people entering Canada through the Roxham road crossing. Many of those unfortunate souls are fleeing a drought that is severely affecting Central America. How will we house them? Will there be a similar 10-fold increase in homelessness?

I fear that our way of life is about to change. And here I am only talking about direct effect on humans. All the natural world is touched.

I don't want to sugar coat it. We are in for several decades of disaster. Even if we were to shut off all CO2 emissions today, the tidal wave of greenhouse gas effects will be with us for some time. And, emissions are still climbing. But as Katherine Heyhoe has said, there is hope.

All of our Unitarian principles will be tested. The interdependent web of life; The worth and dignity of the refugees on our door step will be a struggle. It will be very difficult to assist them all, especially when we are dealing with major problems in our own backyard as we have seen.

The goals that are have set, like a 40% reduction by 2030 feel like a pass or fail. If we reach that goal, we will be fine but if we fail, we will be done in. Don't believe it. Every 1/10th of a degree that the global temperature rises will make a difference. It's not all win or lose, but a continuum.

We have a future that has significant change ahead but we have the ability to shape that future. For every action you take, someone might tell you its wrong or not enough. This is no accident as there are influencers out there making it so. It is easy to be cynical. Let's be clear, no-one is perfect when it comes to the climate crisis! We do what we are willing to. That is why there are no minimum standards for our Greening tree. I hope that by the end of this presentation you will consider doing even more than you now do.

And we have hope. Chris Turner, in his book "How to be a Climate Optimist" calls this the hummer decade based on the noise EVs make. We are finding the technical solutions that we need. Solar panels are now cheaper for producing electricity than coal, wind turbines are getting larger and more prevalent; heat pumps and electric cars are becoming ubiquitous. Electric and hydrogen powered planes are in test mode. The solution may be to electrify everything, and produce electricity in a sustainable manner.

BC is ahead of the curve in North America. The Clean BC and the building step code plans are decent and might be achieved if we act on those plans. But currently, oil and gas still provide 65% of BC energy needs.

Nanaimo is ahead of the curve, let's use that. We have the donut model of economics, policy changes that favour the environment, and a council and staff that seems to understand the crisis and wants to do something about it.

Nanaimo Unitarians are ahead of the curve. Just a few examples: Frances working with the city to reduce the use of natural gas; Don has the impossible plan; Bill, Brenda and KJ are on the Nanaimo Climate action hub board; Larry Boldt is head of the Mid Island Electric Vehicle Association; Larry Whalley is leading the charge to make heat pumps affordable; Paul Manly was a Green party MP. sorry if I missed anyone. These amazing people are doing great work and we can be proud to sit amongst them.

And besides governments, industry is also getting on board. For instance, Walmart has been making some significant inroads reducing their emissions. Yes, I frown on the whole idea of Walmart and consumerism but is it more likely that Walmart will meet their emission goals in 10 years or that there are no more Walmart's? Working with capitalism might be part of the solution.

And we can all do better, indeed we must. Our Fellowship has done a pretty good job of reducing our impact and increasing our collective knowledge. Our greening tree stories are heartening but our individual efforts do not deal with the collective problem very well. We have been trying for some 50 years to get people onto public transport, reduce/reuse/ recycle and turn the heat down with little global effect.

We are constantly bombarded with news about the Gross domestic product. If it drops below 2.5 growth everyone starts to panic. But this tells us how well Bay Street is doing; it says nothing about the state of the world. Zero % growth might just be the ticket. Consumption is the driver of all industry. Author Edward Abbey says “growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of a cancer cell”

Carbon footprint calculations are a great tool but have a significant blind spot. Imagine I purchase 365 jeans this year, one for each day. As ludicrous as this sounds, as long as I take the bus to the mall, use reusable bags and dump the jeans at the Sally Anne, my carbon footprint calculation stays the same. So, a simpler new mantra “BUY LESS NEW STUFF”. Less new clothes, new fuel, new trips, new electronics whatever.

We have been programmed to consume. Julia Kristeva, a psychoanalyst says “Desires are manufactured as surely as are the commodities meant to fulfill them”.

Personal efforts are important but we need more. Vaclav Smil speaks of the three major energy shifts in history. The capture of fire, shift to agriculture, rise of fossil fuel use and we are on the verge of the 4th. Wilful shift to alternative energy sources.

We do have the technical solutions as shown on the slides. Basically, electrify everything and produce only green electricity. A 2019 Bloomberg business report indicates that “Solar and wind are proliferating not because of moral do-gooders. But because they’re now the most profitable power business in most of the world”

Although we have the technical solutions available and starting to be implemented, there is going to be a period of upheaval. Chris Woulf 2 weeks ago talked about the Israelites who spent 40 years wandering in the desert. We may have a similar period of upheaval before things can settle down again. The die is already cast for significant change. It is an act of faith to move forward knowing we will somehow adapt.

And Unitarians have a role to play in this transition. Over the coming years people will likely become more despondent and fearful. They may look for a place to express their grief and anxiety. I call these people spiritual refugees. With the general demise of mainstream religions, we can provide a place of sanctity and sanity.

In the Myth of normal Gabor Mate talks about the Compassion of possibility. “Possibility is connected to many of humanity’s greatest gifts; wonder, awe, mystery, and imagination – the qualities that allow us to remain connected to that which we can’t necessarily prove. Staying open to possibility doesn’t require instant results. It means knowing that there is more to all of us than meets the eye”

A Canadian think tank went to work and found that Canada can achieve its goals and it would **benefit** the economy using existing technologies.

We have the technical solutions but we need political will. Political will comes from politicians understanding that the public wants change.

We are generally shallow creatures that can be easily manipulated by media. So it is with politicians. Their attention span on any issue is slight. If they are always hearing people telling them to stop fracking for instance, instead of lobbyists for the oil and gas industry telling how safe fracking is, they will pay attention.

In 2023, the pen just might be mightier than the recycling bin. Many climate groups have campaigns that include petitions, letters, phone calls and visits to legislators. In just one hour, you can easily pen a letter, phone an MLA, talk to a friend or attend a seminar. I am requesting that you consider pledging so many hours per week to advocate for climate. Oh, I know you have no time but I remember being in Kelowna in 2004 when lightning struck about 100 m from where my family was sailing near rattlesnake island, The ensuing Okanogan fire consumed over 200 homes and almost all of our time over the next several weeks. If Mt. Benson was on fire, believe me, we would find the time for it. But this is a slow rising tide so we have to trick ourselves into immediate action.

And it need not be onerous. Anaya Johnson in her Ted talk on the green solution suggests writing out what concerns you most, what you are good at and what brings you joy. Find where these intersect and you will be invigorated by your task. You need not be negative. Imagine influencing an MLA by sending a letter that thanks them for doing such a good job on the Clean BC plan, and then asking them to do a little more.

One such action to get involved in are the 6 new pipelines on the books for BC. I am not talking about the Trans Mountain or Coastal Gas link projects as these are near complete. These new pipeline projects spell disaster. A natural gas pipeline has at least 3 extremely negative effects. First is the fracking that destroys huge areas of land (9 acres per drill pad), creates massive amounts of unclean water (each well uses some 11 mil liters of water), leaks methane into the air, causes earthquakes and who knows what else. Then you have the transportation of that gas. The pipeline crosses many creeks and is often imposed upon First Nations lands, they leak methane at joints and ports and when it gets to the coast massive amounts of energy are required to cool it to -160 C so that it's liquified for transport onto a ship. The power needed will suck up most of what we can produce from easy alternative sources, leaving little for Electric vehicles and heat pumps. Finally, once the LNG is offloaded at some far-off land, it will then be burnt creating CO2 emissions in the mega ton range. LNG Canada's Phase 1 alone will boost BC's emissions by 6.6 megatons, or more than 10 percent. These new pipelines are in the early stages of development and we can help dissuade our governments from permitting them. Now, before billions have been invested

And this is just one of many projects that the governments have control over. Old growth forests, fossil fuel subsidies, heat pump costs, all need to get attention from the public.

The EJC cannot do all this ourselves. We highly recommend that you join other groups that have their own campaigns. A few of these are lead now for federal issues, Dogwood BC or WE-CAN for provincial issues, NCAH for Nanaimo and area. Most of the work might be done at home.

So here is where the battery gets charged. I have laid out why the climate crisis is important, with a way forward, and what you can do. Without thinking of the how, or what, or when, how many are willing to pledge one hour or more a week for the climate crisis. Please raise your hand. 2 hours per week, 4 hours 7?

Wow. This is great. We have a new email ejc@ufon.ca which you can use to ask questions or tell us what you are doing.

And I'll leave you with this. Buy less new stuff; join a climate action group, and remember the science is easy "It's real, It's us. Experts agree. It's bad. There's hope"

Blessed be