

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FAITH & ECOLOGY SEMINARY EDUCATION CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK CITY SPEAKS TO THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Seminary Deans and Faculty Convene at Union Theological Seminary to Address Growing Demand For Integrating Faith and Ecology Curriculum at Seminaries

New York, NY – December 15, 2016 – Yesterday's Faith & Ecology Seminary Education Conference engaged seminary deans and faculty to explore ways of **integrating faith and ecology into their theology curriculums so that emerging clergy can speak to the ecological crisis**. The full-day event took place at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, and was co-organized by The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, the Center for Earth Ethics of Union Theological Seminary; the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue at Jewish Theological Seminary; and the Green Seminary Initiative.

According to Union President Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, "**Faith leadership is essential to the awareness and protection of Creation, especially in this challenging time**. Union is delighted to welcome these educators for this historic gathering to respond to the need to fully integrate ecology into the work of seminaries."

The conference offered tools to enable administrators and faculty members from theological schools, divinity schools, and seminaries to better educate students on ecology issues from the perspective of different faith traditions.

On why this conference is important now, Rabbi Yonatan Neril, founder and executive director of The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, said, "This groundbreaking event promotes the expansion of ecology and stewardship to become an integral component of seminaries' curricula. It is part of the **crucial process of reorienting our global community towards the collective protection of Creation**, starting with the future religious leaders of America."

A keynote dialogue was provided by Dr. Timothy Van Meter, a professor at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and co-organizer of the Seminary Environmental Leadership Initiative, and Dr. Laurel Kearns, co-founder of The Green Seminary Initiative and professor at Drew Theological School. Other speakers included; Karenn Gore, director of the Center for Earth Ethics; Rabbi Yonatan Neril, founder and director of the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development; Rabbi Dr. Burt Visotzky, Director, the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue

at Jewish Theological Seminary; and Rev. Fletcher Harper, Executive Director of GreenFaith and co-organizer of the Green Seminary Initiative.

Seminary faculty and deans also learned in breakout workshops on the emerging fields of faith-based environmental education. Topics included how seminaries can encourage faculty to include ecology teachings in their existing courses, and how they can integrate faith and ecological teaching into existing courses in theology, Bible, homiletics, ethics, counseling, and others. This significant event to engage seminaries in the New York metro area on issues of faith and ecology had **65 participants and speakers. The Christian, Jewish, indigenous, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist participants came from over fifteen seminaries** and ten other organizations in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

The conference was undertaken based on support from [the Julia Burke Foundation](#).

[About Union Theological Seminary](#): Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is a seminary and a graduate school of theology established in 1836 by founders “deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church.”

[About the Center for Earth Ethics](#): The Center for Earth Ethics (CEE) is a forum for education, public discourse and movement building that draws on faith and wisdom traditions to address our ecological crisis and its root causes.

[About the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development](#): The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD) educates and empowers religious leaders and faith communities toward environmental stewardship.

[About the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue at Jewish Theological Seminary](#): MCID sponsors discussions and activities among diverse leaders, and focuses on fostering Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim understanding.

[About the Green Seminary Initiative](#): The Green Seminary Initiative (GSI) fosters efforts by theological schools and seminaries to incorporate care for creation into the identity and mission of the institution.

This Conference is generously supported by

THE JULIA BURKE FOUNDATION

