I moved to the Jersey Shore in the summer of 2019. Despite the sunny weather, there was a cloud that seemed to pass through my daily conversations: Hurricane Sandy. Everyone had their story to share. Sandy initiated a series of events that led Waterspirit to lose the beachfront retreat center we had called home for nearly 20 years. The lingering grief from that move was palpable every day in my new office. Additionally, my team was still dealing with the cost of home repairs and other lingering impacts from the superstorm.

As an environmental group, Waterspirit cannot turn away from the knowledge that these kinds of weather events will only become more frequent as climate change becomes exacerbated, and will be joined by other kinds of environmental impacts as well. Furthermore, we are not the only ones sitting with this daily discomfort. The tension and unease generated by awareness of the precariousness of life’s future on Earth are feelings which we might call “eco-anxiety.”

Eco-anxiety (or “solastalgia”, climate anxiety, climate grief, etc.) is a phenomenon that is just beginning to be recognized and named as more people become directly impacted by climate change. It is not limited to any particular demographic, nor is it a sign of weakness. (Perhaps it is this depth of emotion that reminds of us of the profound love for Earth that motivates us to act.) In 2012, the Climate Psychology Alliance was formed to address this issue, and many major media outlets have been increasingly covering this topic since the Global Climate Strikes in September 2019.

Identifying eco-anxiety is a necessary step in being able to address it appropriately. This way, we avoid being caught off guard by the feelings it can generate at inopportune moments, and we avoid the risk of emotional paralysis, fatigue, or burn-out. Addressing these heavy feelings in community can be a way of generating the personal resilience needed to cope with an uncertain future. Giving attention to our mental and emotional well-being can be a spiritual act as well, particularly when doing so helps us find meaning and purpose, cultivates relationships and love, and encourages reconciliation and hope.

For this reason, since September 2019 Waterspirit has offered a peer-to-peer eco-anxiety support group. This group practices the Good Grief Network’s “10 Steps to Personal Resilience and Empowerment in a Chaotic Climate” method. Groups meet over the course of ten weeks to help build personal resilience and empowerment while strengthening community ties in order to combat despair, inaction, and eco-anxiety together.

We have noticed that these groups appeal to those who are new to environmental awareness as well as those who are long-time advocates. Four different media outlets have contacted us about the group, so eco-anxiety is clearly striking a chord in the national consciousness. If you are interested in joining a group in the future or if you would like more information about how to bring a group to your community, please reach out to us. We would appreciate your help to decide the best day of the week and time at which to hold our next group!

— Blair Nelsen, Executive Director
**Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service at Waterspirit with Students from St. Rose of Lima Church**

On January 20th, Waterspirit welcomed students and chaperones from St. Rose of Lima Church in Freehold to honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We began our day in the Sanctuary, where we read aloud the prayer, *Healing the Whole*, by Hagen Hasselbach, which reminds us the importance of living in peace and harmony with Mother Earth. The group gathered in Wilson Hall, where we had time to do a ‘Blue Sky’ activity, which is a visioning activity that allowed the students to express what they care about. They were told to imagine a better world for their group, neighborhood, community, state, nation, and/or the world. This activity encourages empathy, compassion, and self-expression. It also helps to learn to react to a negative situation with a positive action. We shared our drawings with each other, and it was great to hear what everyone saw their future looking like. We had just enough time to bundle up and walk over to the nearby beach at Victory Park, where we spent the rest of our time together picking up trash that we found along the shore. It was an excellent time and we are looking forward to more collaborations with students from St. Rose of Lima and other parishes in the future.

**Honor and Memory Cards**

Waterspirit has beautifully printed “In Honor of” and “In Memory of” cards that help you give a card while making a donation in support of Waterspirit. If you would like more information about these cards, please call or email us.

- **In Memory of Elma Smith**
  Pat Murtha

- **In Memory of Agatha M. Breidenbach**
  Pat Murtha

- **In Honor of Suzanne Golas, CSJP**
  Mary Ann and Steve Jeselson

- **In Honor of Bill Burke**
  Associate Core Group

**Investing in Waterspirit’s Future**

Waterspirit is pleased to announce its recent approval for a grant from the CSJP Sponsored Ministry Support Fund! This Fund was created to further the CSJP tradition, spirituality and charism among the Congregation’s sponsored ministries in New Jersey. Waterspirit will put this generous grant toward building its long-term development infrastructure, ensuring our institutional sustainability into the future. We are deeply grateful for this support!

**DROPLETS**

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

~ Native American Proverb

**Tips for Managing Eco-Anxiety:**

- Live more in alignment with your values; Changing your lifestyle to be more compatible with your values can help eco-anxiety.

- Give your home an energy audit; Reducing your energy use helps you take some direct ownership of your energy consumption.

- Focus your efforts on changing systems, not yourself; work with others to lobby your congresspeople and other government officials.

- Find like-minded people; find a community of like-minded individuals in which you can express and share your feelings of eco-anxiety.

- Protect and nurture local green spaces; Getting involved in community environmental projects may help your climate anxiety while also being good for the planet. Green spaces absorb carbon dioxide, cool urban areas and reduce flood risk.

- Talk about the changes you made; Talking about the practice things that people can do in their day-to-day lives gives people some sense of control back and can really improve one’s well-being.

Save paper! Sign up to receive Waterspirit’s e-mail newsletter instead of our print newsletter. The content is the same—only greener! To sign up today, please call or e-mail us at (732) 923-9788 or water@waterspirit.org.

If you no longer wish to receive these newsletters, please notify us by phone or e-mail.
On February 7th, Waterspirit had the honor of hosting our first Transformational Breath Introductory Workshop. Transformational Breath is unlike other breath meditation, although there are some similarities. There are many benefits people realize through the practice of Transformational Breath. These benefits include improved physical health, cleared emotional wounds and enhanced mental capabilities. Many have also found a stronger connection to spirit while cultivating a greater awareness of the breath and self. Your life can open up and become more fulfilling through the practice of Transformational Breath. Our facilitator, Rich Hume, and our co-facilitator, Darryn Murdoch, used proven gentle movement, sound vibration techniques and simple core affirmations so that our participants were able to achieve and maintain the wave-like “full circular breath” pattern. This activates a high frequency of electromagnetic vibration throughout the body and mind. According to the scientific principle of entrainment, low-frequency energy patterns are raised and transformed in the presence of the higher frequency energy state. This clears blockages within the energy systems. It is difficult to verbalize how empowering this self-healing modality is until you experience it yourself, as every individual who goes through the process has a truly unique and awakening experience.

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to this event, and we are delighted to announce we will be hosting our second Transformational Breath Workshop on Friday, April 24th from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. Email water@waterspirit.org or call 732-923-9788 to RSVP! Tickets for this event will be available through Eventbrite in March. Be sure to look for a link to register on our website and social media channels.

United Nations Update: Greening the Blue

On February 4 and 5, Waterspirit’s Blair Nelsen and Abbey Koshak attended the preparatory meetings for the 2020 United Nations Ocean Conference at UN headquarters in New York. These meetings lay the groundwork for the conference that will be held in Lisbon from June 2-6, 2020. This conference is intended to set the international community on a path to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Under Water by 2030.

On one hand, these meetings were a refreshing peek into the near-consensus of the international community. Ocean pollution cannot be addressed without also addressing pollution on land and the entire life cycle of products. Ocean acidification must be tackled together with ocean deoxygenation and salinization, and neither can be resolved without halting climate change. Ecology is integrally interwoven and so must our solutions be. Prior to these meetings, a coalition of civil society groups drafted RISE UP: A Blue Call For Action, a scientifically-based set of measures that countries could use to meet the goals of SDG14. Waterspirit has signed onto this call to action, which can be found at riseupfortheocean.org.

On the other hand, as American citizens we felt the weight of responsibility to continue being agents of change in our own country after listening to the delegate of the United States intervene. His voice alone spoke out against addressing land, climate, and oceans together. Our work in our own nation is ongoing as we look toward a future where our country could be an international presence for peace, justice, and a healthy planet.
Clockwise from top left to right: Students from St. Rose of Lima Church in Freehold visit Waterspirit for MLK Jr. Day of Service and help us clean up Victory Park Beach in Rumson; Executive Director, Blair Nelsen, leads the Winter Solstice; Program Manager, Abbey Koshak, leads students in an activity on MLK Jr. Day; Blair and Charlene brave the cold and track litter found on the beach; Abbey and Blair at the UN; a peaceful moment during the SomaSonder dance performance at our Winter Solstice; Blair and Abbey are all smiles at the UN Oceans Conference; BTS from inside the UN; Participants at our first Transformational Breath Workshop get ready to breathe; Empower NJ Rally in Newark; We demand clean water for all!
Earth Day was founded in 1970 as a day of education about environmental issues, and Earth Day 2020 occurs on Wednesday, April 22 – the holiday's 50th anniversary. The holiday is now a global celebration that is sometimes extended into Earth Week, a full seven days of events focused on green living. The brainchild of Senator Gaylord Nelson and inspired by the protests of the 1960s, Earth Day began as a “national teach-in on the environment” and was held on April 22 to maximize the number of students that could be reached on university campuses. By raising public awareness of pollution, Nelson hoped to bring environmental causes into the national spotlight.

By the early 1960s Americans were becoming aware of the effects of pollution on the environment. Rachel Carson’s 1962 bestseller, _Silent Spring_, raised the specter of the dangerous effects of pesticides on America’s countryside. Later in the decade, a 1969 fire on Cleveland’s Cuyahoga River shed light on the problem of chemical waste disposal. Until that time, protecting the planet’s natural resources was not part of the national political agenda, and the number of activists devoted to large-scale issues such as industrial pollution was minimal. Factories pumped pollutants into the air, lakes and rivers with few legal consequences.

Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962, Senator Gaylord Nelson, a Democrat from Wisconsin, was determined to convince the federal government that the planet was at risk. According to Nelson, he envisioned a large-scale, grassroots environmental demonstration “to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda.”

Dennis Hayes, a young activist who had served as student president at Stanford University, was selected as Earth Day’s national coordinator, and he worked with an army of student volunteers and several staff members from Nelson’s Senate office to organize the project. According to Nelson, “Earth Day worked because of the spontaneous response at the grassroots level. We had neither the time nor resources to organize 20 million demonstrators and the thousands of schools and local communities that participated. That was the remarkable thing about Earth Day. It organized itself.”

The first Earth Day was effective at raising awareness about environmental issues and transforming public attitudes. Earth Day kicked off the environmental decade with a bang. During the 1970s, a number of important pieces of environmental legislation was passed, among them the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Improvement Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Another key development was in December 1970, the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, which was tasked with protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment – air, water and land.

Since 1970 Earth Day celebrations have grown. According to the Earth Day Network, more than 1 billion people are involved in Earth Day activities, making it “the largest secular civic event in the world.”

—Adapted from History.com Editors
Movie Night
Join us for a double feature night: 'Rumson Hill' & 'Highland Beach'. Come see two award-winning historical films by local filmmaker, Chris Brenner, and take an engaging journey through the past with a Q & A with Chris Brenner afterwards. Tickets are $5 and include free popcorn! Kids under 5 are free!

Spring Equinox
Join us ONLINE for an evening to celebrate and reflect on the freshness and excitement of the rebirth of nature. Enjoy this evening of reflection and ritual in celebration of Spring, a new season of vitality and energy for Mother Earth and the human spirit. The video will be posted on our YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFzJckCctUZ22hEjroMoLitwQ) at 7 p.m. on March 20.

Meditation for Earth
Join us ONLINE for a contemplative prayer for Earth with music and silence. New videos will be uploaded to our YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFzJckCctUZ22hEjroMoLitwQ) every Tuesday at 12:15 p.m.

Journey of the Universe
Join us for a screening of Emmy award-winning film Journey of the Universe, an awe-inspiring voyage through the history of the life-giving universe that we call home. Following the movie will be an in-depth Q&A with John Grim, Professor of Religion and Ecology at Yale University.

Transformational Breath Workshop
Come experience what some have called the ‘shortcut to enlightenment’. Rich and Kirk both are certified Transformational Breath Facilitators and Group Leaders. Transformational Breath blends the conscious and unconscious mind to achieve our highest potential. Experience the benefits and application of a full, deep, connected breath! Eliminate restrictive breathing patterns and heal yourself - physically, mentally and emotionally. Live fully & be joyful!

Many events have been impacted in order to safeguard our collective health and well-being during the novel coronavirus pandemic. For up-to-date information, please take a look at our website or social media, or contact us at water@waterspirit.org or (732) 923-9788.