

**Sent:** Thu, 24 Jul 2014 17:43:30 -0400  
**From:** "Rogers, Melissa" <melissa\_rogers@who.eop.gov>  
**To:** jpodesta@americanprogress.org  
**Subject:** Fw: Interfaith Worship Service and the UN Special Session on Climate Change  
[R4E Press Release 7.15.14\[2\].doc](#)

I wanted to make sure you knew about this event.

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**From:** Fred Davie [mailto:fdavie@uts.columbia.edu]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 24, 2014 05:40 PM  
**To:** Jarrett, Valerie; Rogers, Melissa  
**Cc:** Fred Davie <fdavie@uts.columbia.edu>  
**Subject:** Interfaith Worship Service and the UN Special Session on Climate Change

Dear Valerie and Melissa:

Union Seminary is working closely with the Wallace Global Fund and the World Council of Churches, and in communication with the UN Secretary General's Office, to plan and conduct an Interfaith worship service on climate change for Sunday, September 21, at 6pm at the Cathedral of St John the Divine here in New York City, to precede the opening of the United Nations Special Session on Climate Change. It has come to our attention that the Secretary General's Office and the CEO of Wallace Global Fund will invite President Obama to attend the service, which will include the heads of the major global faith traditions, including non-Abrahamic traditions.

I write to say that if at any point you would like a briefing on this Interfaith service, please let us know. The lead Union Seminary staff organizing this event is Karenna Gore, former Vice President Al Gore's daughter, who is also a Union alumna and director of the Union Forum—a program of Union Seminary. Through our Union Forum, Karenna is also coordinating a "Religions of the Earth Conference" to precede the UN Special Session.

We are available to brief you on both the "Religions of the Earth" conference and the Interfaith service if at any point that would be helpful.

Kind regards,

Fred

Frederick A. Davie, M.Div.  
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# Religions for the Earth

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## CONFERENCE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**JULY 15, 2014**

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**RELIGIONS FOR THE EARTH: A MULTIFAITH GATHERING TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE  
CHANGE AT UNION FROM SEPTEMBER 19–21, 2014**  
CONFERENCE WILL PRECEDE THE UN CLIMATE SUMMIT

**New York, NY** — On September 19–21, the weekend before the United Nations Climate Summit, more than 200 religious and spiritual leaders from across the world will gather at [Union Theological Seminary](#) in New York City for the [Religions for the Earth](#) conference. This is no ordinary conference: as the world’s political leaders prepare to address an unprecedented moral crisis, Union will offer a unique platform for the world’s ethical leaders to voice the concerns and commitments of the spiritual and faith traditions. Participants are prepared to use their reach and influence to galvanize faith-based action. This action will be in support of a just climate treaty and the new measures within nations, regions and cultures that will be necessary to support the treaty and protect the most vulnerable among us in this time when profits are prioritized over the well-being of people, and the effects of pollution are being felt in extreme weather patterns, exacerbated social instability and a decrease in the quality of food, air and water.

[Union Forum](#) will host the Religions for the Earth conference. Union Forum is a platform within Union Theological Seminary for discourse about religion and social ethics that helps inform civic action. Union has a history of leadership in interreligious dialogue and social justice and recently became the first seminary in the world to divest its endowment from all investment in fossil fuels. Religions for the Earth will be hosted in conjunction with [The Interfaith Center of New York](#), [GreenFaith](#), and the [Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions](#).

“Religious leaders who feel called to protect creation are feeling the urgency of this crisis and looking for ways to be effective,” said Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, president of Union



Theological Seminary. “Now is the time for us to come together across divisive issues and divergent traditions and use our reach and influence for the good of the earth we share.”

The conference is designed to spur a conversation about climate change as a social justice issue, to put forth the moral imperative to care for the natural world, and to help shape and accelerate actions in support of an effective international climate treaty. The program includes workshops and commitments for specific and verifiable follow-up efforts, including the announcement of an international multifaith campaign for a strong and just climate treaty.

“What ethicists, religious leaders and traditional indigenous elders bring to this conversation is conviction about the deepest human values at stake,” said Karenna Gore, director of Union Forum. “These values can reveal the connections between the exploitation of people and the exploitation of the earth and guide us to solutions that promote integrity and justice.”

A multifaith celebration and commissioning ceremony will follow the conference at 6 p.m. on Sunday, September 21, at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. This multifaith celebration will be a public event that will include government officials, activists, scientists and artists, and will be held in conjunction with the [World Council of Churches](#) and [Religions for Peace](#) as well as other institutional partners in building momentum for a decisive U.N. Climate Summit. Additional details regarding this event will be forthcoming.

**What:** Religions for the Earth Conference

**Who:** A full list of participants will be announced soon. To date, participants include:

- Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq, IceWisdom International, Eskimo-Kalaallit Elder, Shaman
- Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, evangelical climate scientist
- Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and director general of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
- Dr. Vandana Shiva, internationally renowned ecologist, author of Earth Democracy, Justice, Sustainability and Peace
- Father Edwin Gariguez, head of Caritas Philippines and recipient of the Goldman Prize
- Hajj Fazlun Khalid, founder/director, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Birmingham, UK
- Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, Parliament of the World’s Religions
- Mindahi Crescencio Bastida Muñoz, Hñahñu-Otomi elder, Zanbatha, Mexico

- Rabbi Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center
- Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, Pastor Emeritus, Providence Missionary Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA
- Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, president of Union Theological Seminary
- Swami Tyagananda, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston, and Hindu Chaplain, Harvard University

**When:** September 19–21, 2014

**Where:** Union Theological Seminary; 3041 Broadway at 121st St.; New York City, NY

**Social Media:** Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and interact with us about the conference using #FaithInChange

**Public Registration:** Not open to the public.

**Media Credentials:** Members of the media who wish to attend the conference or the multifaith commissioning ceremony in New York City, please contact Megan Vibert at [mvibert@scottcircle.com](mailto:mvibert@scottcircle.com) and include your name, title, news outlet and contact information.

For more information regarding the Religions for the Earth conference, please visit [ReligionsForTheEarth.org](http://ReligionsForTheEarth.org).

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### **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.” Union prepares women and men for committed lives of service to the church, academy and society. A Union education develops practices of mind and body that foster intellectual and academic excellence, social justice, and compassionate wisdom. Grounded in the Christian tradition and responsive to the needs of God’s creation, Union’s graduates make a difference wherever they serve.

At Union we believe that a new interreligious spirituality is the world’s best hope for peace, justice, and the care of God’s creation. Empowered by groundbreaking inquiry aligned with practical realism and a bias for action, Union is charting a profound new course for enduring social change. Our graduates make a difference wherever they serve, practicing their vocations with courage and perseverance, and speaking clearly and acting boldly on behalf of social justice in all of its forms.

Learn more at [www.utsnyc.edu](http://www.utsnyc.edu).

### **About Union Forum**

Union Forum is a platform for discourse about faith, spirituality and social ethics that helps inform, shape and accelerate civic action. It seeks to engage and interrogate the role of religion in the conflict and circumstances of the world. Learn more at [www.unionforum.org](http://www.unionforum.org).