

PEACE CANDLE - September 15, 2019

On August 20, 2018, Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg skipped school to protest by herself outside Sweden's parliament. She was urging those in power to act on climate change. Ever since, her worldwide notoriety has grown steadily, thanks to the clear terms in which she speaks about why people must pay attention to Earth's climate. Despite the fame, she disdains celebrity. She makes no claim to heroism. In words and deeds, Greta is the embodiment of philosopher Howard Zinn's admonition: "We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can quietly become a power no government can suppress, a power that can transform the world."

This past Friday, Greta led a protest at the White House. "Never give up," she told the protesters, adding, "See you next week, on September 20."

The global climate strike that's planned for this coming Friday, September 20 will likely be large. New York City's public school system recently announced that it will excuse the absences of any students who participate in the climate strike. Here in the Northeast Kingdom, students in Northern Vermont University-Lyndon's Climate Consensus group are leading a walk starting at 11:30am from campus down to the green next to the Freighthouse. Faculty, staff, as well as Lyndon business and community members will be joining millions of others who will be walking out of our schools, our workplaces and our homes to show our leaders that we will accept nothing less than an immediate transition to clean energy, green jobs, and a just and healthy planet. All three United Church of Christ Conference offices in Southern New England will be closed for business so staffers in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island can support the Global Climate Strike. "There are some who are afforded the privilege of complacency, saying that we are faced with a climate crisis in the distant future," said the Rev. Michael Malcom, pastor at Rush Memorial Congregational Church in Atlanta and executive director of Alabama Interfaith Power & Light. "However, for countless others, the crisis is now. The climate crisis is confronting us with the fierce urgency of now, and we must respond now. We are being called in this moment to care. Acting

during the climate strike shows that you care."

As Greta says:

'Adults keep saying: "We owe it to the young people to give them hope." But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act.'

You are all more than welcome to join us on Friday at the green next to the Freighthouse.

Brian Webb of Climate Caretakers, a community of Christians committed to prayer and action on climate change, reflected on Greta's inspirational actions back in March. His words remain relevant today: "...these developments stirred to mind Isaiah 11:6 - in particular the closing clause, '...and a little child will lead them.' There are certainly Messianic overtones to this, and many often interpret the passage as declaring the young will lead adults to show them the way to righteous life.

Isaiah explains that, in a future era, a child will lead previously incompatible wild animals in peace and unity. As poetic metaphor and prophetic symbolism, this suggests a future time when the once wild and unreconciled abide together and take their lead from a child.

This actually sounds like the miraculus time we need to be in - a time where adults cease to act like wild, unreconciled animals and when the young do lead the transformed adults to righteousness. Until such a transformation occurs, we, including creation, will continue to experience pain and suffering rather than healing and hope."

*Dear God,*

*Thank you for the fresh and continued signs of hope. Thank you for evidence that you are stirring in the world's youth today and through them stirring adults to follow. Thank you that your spirit has roused a new generation to care for your creation and protect its climate. Thank you for heightened awareness of our responsibility to act.*

*For the sake of our common home and a healthy climate, continue to stir*

*youth from fear to leadership, and adults from inertia to action. Amplify the prophetic voice of young people speaking truth to power as they exercise free speech and boldly express their passion for a livable tomorrow.*

*Amen.*