

Prayer Breakfast Honors Bill McKibben and Larry Gibson (Posthumous) with Steward of Creation Award

The National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (NRCCC) sponsored its annual Prayer Breakfast on May 20, 2013 held at 10th Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC. Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Jewish, and Muslim leaders participated in celebrating God's gift of creation.

Bill McKibben was awarded the "Steward of Creation" for 2013. Inscribed on the bronze plaque given to McKibben is written, *Presented in acknowledgment of Prophetic Vision, Inspired Leadership and Service on behalf of God's Good Earth.*

McKibben is a renowned author, teacher, and activist.

Bill McKibben Speaks at Prayer Breakfast

He is Methodist, has written a number of articles on biblical and theological precepts related to creation care, and serves as a Sunday School teacher.

McKibben founded and heads **350.org**, which in 4 short years has grown into an international grassroots movement with the goal to stop increased global warming. **350.org** mobilizes citizens to confront the powers that contribute to climate change, including civil disobedience campaigns against the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline, a current "Do the Math Tour" that makes climate science understandable, and a major divestment campaign calling for colleges, church denominations, municipal governments, and individuals to take their savings out of dirty energy. **350.org** draws its name from foremost climate scientist **James Hansen's** conclusion that atmospheric CO₂ above 350 parts per million will significantly change the conditions that human civilization developed upon Earth in the past 10 millennia.

Hansen, himself a past recipient of the Steward of Creation Award, gave one of the nominating speeches for **McKibben**. In his remarks, Hansen extolled **McKibben's** amazing work ethic, his prescient books, and his mobilizing ability. **Hansen** said, "This is extremely important...getting young people involved in this [climate advocacy]...but it's the young people who have to get involved in this. Bill has been exceptionally effective."

Dr. Lise Van Susteren, a forensic psychiatrist and co-founder of the **Interfaith Moral Action on Climate**, nominated **McKibben** with a stirring battle cry for the planet, culminating with, "I place in nomination, without exaggeration, writer,

warrior, philosopher, and patriot, and if you think I'm kidding, come meet **Bill McKibben**."

CFTM's own Laura Dagley nominated **Bill McKibben** in behalf of the growing numbers of young people he inspires with his courageous, creative, brilliant, and sincere organizing. "I especially want to thank you [**McKibben**] for giving us a sense of empowerment...you have let us know that we have a voice, that it is heard, and that it has an impact. You have shown a love for the future, and a recognition that the young people are the future, and that we will be carrying out the battle."

Bill McKibben challenged us with three points. (1) "We desperately need a sense of the science...how quickly we need to move and on what scale" His rhetorical answer? "We have almost no time in which to get things done on an enormous scale. This is the biggest transition

humans have ever talked about. This cannot be done simply by individual and small group acts, but by engagement with the structural change...we are enmeshed in structural sin. If we are not willing to challenge those structures forthrightly, then it won't get us where we want to go."

(2) Following up on the previous point, **McKibben** noted, "That involves a creation of an amount of conflict... which is part of our faith tradition." **McKibben** said this includes naming enemies such as the fossil fuel industry. Alluding to scripture, "In our time, these are the powers and principalities." Speaking of divestment from these industries, **McKibben** quoted from Luke 12:34, "Where your treasure is, there is your heart."

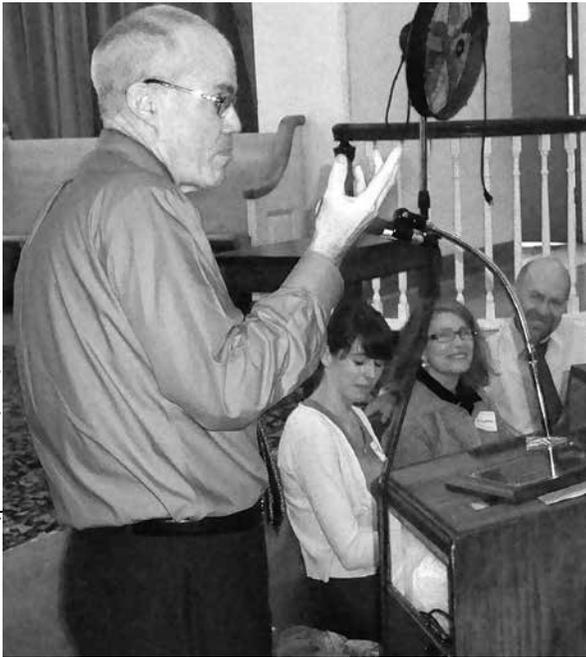
(3) **McKibben** looked up at us with a challenge. "This fight is going to get harder before it gets easier. It's going to require a real willingness to commit on deep levels. People are starting to go to jail, which is a good thing." He went on to elaborate on what he considered one of the great accomplishments of the last century, the power of nonviolent action to change institutions and people. "We've got to make it work on a global basis." Noting that young people risk their future careers with strong civil disobedience, **McKibben** challenged older people to step up in this witness. "We need a lot of collars [religious leaders] on the front lines...if we had all the time in the world, then the easy way would be the slow educational and cultural transformation of one person and one institution at a time." We don't have the luxury of plenty of time.

McKibben concluded, "One of the good things about being people of faith is that we're not completely consigned to scientific analysis only;

we're allowed to hope that if we do everything that we can possibly do, that there are forces inside and outside this world that will meet us half way. But that hope is cheap hope unless it comes from people who are doing absolutely everything they can be doing to make this happen."

A posthumous Steward of Creation Award was dedicated to **Larry Gibson**, who passed away last September. **Allen Johnson** displayed **Gibson's** trademark fluorescent Keeper of the Mountains T-Shirt, and told how a short-statured man with limited education and an obscure career had become so inspirational to thousands of people. **Gibson's** uncompromising courage to speak and live in truth and integrity continues to resonate in our lives. In his remarks, **James Hansen** told how **Gibson** was the person who inspired him to take the bold step of civil disobedience as a witness to the serious issues of today.

Prayers, short presentations, and reports were offered by the following: **Rabbi Fred Dobb**, **Dr. Mirele Goldsmith**, **Rabbi Larry Troster** (Jewish); **Fr. Jacek Orzechowski OFM** (Roman Catholic); **Fr. Dimitri Antokas** (Eastern Orthodox); **Rev. Dr. Olin Ivey** (Mainline Protestant); **Rev. Mitch Hescox** (Evangelical); **Imam Ibrahim Ramey** (Muslim). **David Krantz** (Green Zionist Alliance) and **Marybeth Lorbiecki** spoke on development of an ocean ethic. **Jim Davidson** talked about the startup of the **Carbon Confession** project. **Dave Carroll** discussed a new energy saving LED light bulb he has developed. **Allen Johnson** reported on epidemiological studies pointing to increased sickness in communities with surface coal mining. **Dr. Richard Miller** discussed the public hearings on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline in Nebraska. **Rabbi Warren Stone** and **Rev. Owen Owens** once again capably hosted the gathering. **NRCCC director Fred Krueger** is again to be commended for his effort in setting up the logistics that brought together this stellar leadership committed to advocacy for God's Earth and all it contains (Psalm 24:1).



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CFTM's own Laura Dagley