YALE FORUM ON RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

The Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology is an international, multireligious project contributing to a new academic field and an engaged moral force of religious environmentalism. With its conferences, publications, monthly newsletter, and website, it explores religious worldviews, texts, and ethics in order to broaden understanding of the complex nature of current environmental concerns. The forum recognizes that religions need to be in dialogue with disciplines such as science, economics, law, and policy in seeking comprehensive solutions to both global and local environmental problems. The co-founders and co-directors of the forum are John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker.

The forum arose from a series of ten conferences on World Religions and Ecology organized by Tucker and Grim at Harvard from 1996 to 1998. They were the series editors for ten volumes from Harvard University Press (1997–2004) that resulted from the conferences.

Since its creation, the forum—which has been based at Yale since 2006—has played an active role in promoting the study of religion and ecology as an emerging field of study and an ethical force for ecojustice. Courses are now taught at colleges and high schools across North America and in Europe, Canada, and Australia. Moreover, a new movement of religious environmentalism is growing in churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques around the world. Now every major religion has statements on the importance of ecological protection and ecojustice. With its many advisers and partners, the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology has played an active role in these developments. It has formed a special partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme Faith for Earth Initiative.

The forum’s website (https://fore.yale.edu), hosted at YSE, is the premier site for research, education, engagement, and outreach in the field of religion and ecology. The website contains information and statements on the world’s religions and their ecological contributions. The site highlights news, events, books, and articles related to world religions and ecology as well as grassroots projects. The site also highlights Forum Spotlights (a video and podcast series of interviews with scholars and other figures doing work related to religion and ecology) and a blog with features on topics of interest to the field. Website highlights are also featured in a monthly email newsletter distributed to about 12,000 people. The website hosts a fully searchable and filterable database of engaged faith-based projects that address the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals. This project was completed in conjunction with the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), Parliament of the World’s Religions, United Religions Initiative, and the Bhumi Project. Projects will continue to be added to the site on a quarterly basis.

The work of the forum includes:

**Joint master’s degree program at Yale** The Yale School of the Environment (YSE) and Yale Divinity School (YDS) offer a joint master’s degree program in religion and ecology—the first of its kind in North America. It is aimed at students who wish
to integrate the study of environmental issues and religious communities in their professional careers and at those who wish to study the cultural and ethical dimensions of environmental problems. The joint degree is supported by co-appointed faculty and by the forum. Beginning in 2017, the program has hosted a graduate student-led conference on religion and ecology each spring.

**Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** A series of courses, Religions and Ecology: Restoring the Earth Community, was released on Yale/Coursera in 2021. The series includes an introduction to the topic as well as studies in indigenous religions, Western religions, and Asian religions.

**Publications** The forum has helped to create a new field of research and teaching in religion and ecology that has implications for environmental policy. Recent publications include:

- A number of volumes by the late cultural historian Thomas Berry, most recently: *Selected Writings* (Orbis Books, 2014), *The Sacred Universe* (Columbia University Press, 2009), *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* (Orbis Books, 2009), and *Evening Thoughts* (University of California Press, 2006), all edited by Tucker and Grim.
- The first biography of Thomas Berry, by Tucker, Grim, and Andrew Angyal (Columbia University Press, 2019).

In addition, the forum has supported the first journal in the field, *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, and Tucker and Grim have served on the editorial board since its founding in 1997. They have also served, with Leonardo Boff and Sean McDonagh, as advisers for the twenty-volume Ecology and Justice series from Orbis Books.

**Conferences** The forum has organized and cosponsored many conferences, including the Thomas Berry Award and Lecture, which has run since 1998. Others include:

- “Renewing Hope: Pathways of Grassroots Religious Environmentalism” (YSE and YDS, 2007, to celebrate the film *Renewal*).
- Thomas Berry Memorial (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, 2009).
- “Environmental Dis/locations: Environmental Justice and Climate Change” (YSE and YDS, 2010).
- With YSE and TERI University, an interdisciplinary workshop focused on the Yamuna River (Delhi and Vrindavan, India, 2011).
- Interdisciplinary conference for the premiere of the film *Journey of the Universe* (YSE and YDS, 2011).
- “Religion and Environmental Stewardship” (YSE and YDS, 2012).
• “Religion and Ecology and Our Planetary Future” (Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, 2016, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Harvard conferences).
• “Living Earth Community: Ways of Being and Knowing the World” (Oak Spring Garden Foundation, Virginia, 2018, with former YSE Dean, Peter Crane).
• With University of Connecticut: “Abrahamic Traditions and Environmental Change” (Rhodes, Greece, 2019).
• With Georgetown University: “Thomas Berry and ‘The Great Work’” (Georgetown University, 2019).

In addition, the forum participates in interdisciplinary conferences worldwide, including conferences with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the Dialogue of Civilizations; the Earth Dialogues led by Gorbachev; the Earth Charter; the Religion, Science and the Environment Symposia, led by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Bartholomew; and the Parliament of the World’s Religions.

Film The forum was a principal adviser for the film Renewal: Inspiring Stories from America’s Religious Environmental Movement (2007) and organized a conference at Yale when the film came out.

Multimedia project Tucker and Grim collaborated with evolutionary philosopher Brian Swimme on the Emmy Award-winning film Journey of the Universe (2011), which was broadcast on PBS and is available on Amazon. The Journey of the Universe project includes a book published by Yale University Press; a twenty-part Conversation series of interviews with scientists and environmentalists available in video and in podcasts; curricular materials for teaching; a newsletter, and a website (http://www.journeyofofheuniverse.org). In 2016 Tucker and Grim created another series of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) for Yale/Coursera, titled Journey of the Universe: A Story for Our Times.