



"This fragile earth . . .

. . . our island home." Such is a phrase found in a prayer in the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 370). Not surprisingly, that phrase weaseled its way into my mind this week as we celebrated the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. I remember that first Earth Day -- back in the day when hippies were still "hippie-ing" and the Vietnam War was still being waged. Many of my friends and I were very excited to be a part of this "new" endeavor -- to save the earth. My hiking buddies and I sewed ecology flags to our backpacks, and I took to taking class notes in green ink!

This 40th anniversary was marked here, at DU, with an Earth Day Summit and other activities, including the

dedication of a [permaculture](#) garden. Of course, the earth let us know that we, and our plans, were not in charge. The dedication was accompanied by tornado sirens, and ultimately interrupted by a tornado watch, forcing all of us participants into a building. "This fragile earth" is no wimp. And we've certainly seen much evidence of that, with earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and China, record snowfalls in the nation's capitol, flooding in the NE United States, and a volcanic eruption in Iceland that basically shut down Europe's air travel -- not to mention the inch of hail in my backyard a few days ago.

One of the explanations (given by some of the Haitian vodou practitioners) for the earthquake in Haiti was that the earth was fighting back for all that we had done to it. Whether or not that's true, it is clear that we, as a species, HAVE done a great deal to mess up "our island home." And that fact continues to come home in many ways, from the extinction of other species to pollution-related diseases to Superfund toxic waste sites. So, whether the earth is fighting back or not, it is clear that it isn't simply, benignly, absorbing all that were inflicting on it.

In his book *Meadowlark Economics**, economist James Eggert makes an impassioned plea for (re)turning to a different way of living, where we recognize that we are all interconnected on this amazing planet. We need to tread lightly, thoughtfully, on the earth. We need to tread lightly, thoughtfully, with each other. Eggert writes: "How lucky we are! Lucky to reside on a planet with tortoise-paced moving continents. Indeed, lucky to inhabit a possible one-in-a-billion 'rare Earth' finely tuned for birthing such a wide range of biodiversity" (p. 92). He goes on to ask, "Where . . . are our rare-Earth religions or a rare-Earth economics, or evidence of rare-Earth political sensibilities circling the globe? Where is our commitment to a rare-Earth covenant . . .?" (p.93).

Where indeed? Well, the world's [religious traditions DO affirm](#) "rare-Earth" care, just as they almost uniformly affirm many other virtues and values. The real issue, of course, is one of will -- OUR will to live the affirmations to which we give lip service. May God strengthen me to "walk the talk" and you to keep our island home habitable for that "wide range of biodiversity" for millenia to come!

Blessings,

Gary

*James Eggert, *Meadowlark Economics: Collected Essays on Ecology, Community, and Spirituality*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books. 2009).