Transforming Climate/Earth Grief

“The ability to process information and make decisions without being disabled by extreme emotional responses is being threatened by climate change. Vulnerabilities include increased depression, stress and anxiety; personal aggression; social instability.”

American Psychological Association: Mental Health and our Changing Climate, 2017

“Climate impacts may have long-term and even permanent effects, such as changing the developmental potential and trajectory of a child”

Currie, J. and Almond, D., 2011, Human Capital Development before Age Five

“Nothing has prepared me for what I’m now seeing…each day, our world devolves more quickly toward disruption from climate change. Those least responsible for the crisis will be hurt the most-the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the emotionally vulnerable.

Lise Van Susteran, MD-Psychiatrist

THE FIVE E’S

1. EMBRACE YOUR EMOTIONS
2. EXPLORE YOUR EMOTIONS
3. EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS
4. ENGAGE YOUR CHALLENGE
5. (RE) ENERGIZE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

EMBRACE your emotions-fear, anger, despair. These feelings signal you care, that you recognize something important to you is being threatened. Caring is the first step to focus our attention and energy positively, creatively and effectively.

EXPLORE YOUR EMOTIONS. Watch your self talk. Instead of saying ‘I am afraid’ or ‘I am angry’ such emotions are better recognized with “I am feeling angry’ or “I am feeling afraid.” It separates who we are from the emotions we experience. After all, do we say “I am the flu” or “I have the flu”? It’s natural to have feelings, but just as important not to let them have you. This is the key to developing resilience…the sense that your problems are solvable.

EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS. give yourself an outlet to express them-to name them. There’s a saying-if you can name them, you can tame them!” And you can then ask for help, and guidance. To frame that request for guidance, seek to discern what your emotions tell you what you care about? What places, what parts of creation, what problems? Step three. Engage in prayer…both active…asking for guidance…and silence…giving the spirit an opportunity to provide inspiration and answers. Outlets such as journaling, music, sketching may also help.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR CHALLENGE AND CONNECT WITH OTHERS WHO CARE. Your family, friends and teachers can help you find others (including them) who feel the same way you do, who care enough to work for change. Choose a group or organization that has goals that you are comfortable with and make sense to you. Connecting with others confirms ‘you’re not alone’. Point out the problems and to develop solutions and to persuade others to adopt those solutions. While it’s important to point out the source of problems, it’s also important to move beyond the ‘blame game’. Focus on what needs to be achieved, how to achieve it, and how to get others to help you.

(RE) ENERGIZE YOUR ENTHUSIASM. Sustain yourself with rest, good nutrition, exercise and positive entertainment. Remind yourself of what you care for and why. Restore your spirit by spending time in the mountains, near the water, in the woods-places that are special to you. Remind yourself of what you care for, what you want to protect and why.