

Green Notes: Weekly Updates from First UMC's Green Team

As Christians, We Must Be at Forefront of Climate Action

For decades, we've been told by climate scientists that [unprecedented weather events were coming](#). This past Monday, we saw six of them devastate communities across the United States.

Closest to home, a [massive flood tore through Yellowstone Park](#), destroying roads, bridges and water/sewer infrastructure. Downstream communities including Gardiner, Cooke City, Red Lodge and Livingston were inundated with water and cut off from help. Homes were flooded; some were swept away. Recovery will take years.

In the Midwest, a derecho – a powerful, single-direction windstorm – brought wind speeds of 80 mph and torrential rains. Wildfires exploded across Arizona, New Mexico and the tundra of [southwest Alaska](#). A record-breaking [heat wave](#) created life-threatening conditions across much of the South and Midwest.

“It's exactly what we as climate scientists have expected for decades,” Marshall Shepherd, director of the atmospheric sciences program at the University of Georgia, told Nick Mott at [High Country News](#). Climate change is causing the water cycle to accelerate, fueled by earlier snowmelt combined with increasingly intense rainfall, he said.

“It's a tale of two extremes,” Shepherd told Mott. At the same time that much of the West is facing debilitating heat waves, extreme wildfires and [the worst drought in 1,200 years](#), climate change is also amplifying the worst rainfall events, including the “atmospheric river” that dumped moisture on the Yellowstone area.

Just as we've seen in [climate disasters across the globe](#), those most affected by this week's events were the least able to rebuild and recover.

You no doubt saw [videos of the home swept into the Yellowstone River](#) outside Gardiner. It was actually five apartments rented to families who work for YNP and who cannot afford to buy a home or to rent one on their own. They escaped with the few possessions they could grab after the river claimed 90 feet of river bank (and the 100-year floodplain) as they slept.

We ended the week more committed than ever to do all we can to stop climate change and its disastrous consequences. It is our duty as Christians. In her 2021 book “Saving Us,” climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe says it this way: “If Christians truly believe we’ve been given responsibility – “dominion” – over every living thing on this planet, as it says at the very beginning of Genesis, then we won’t only objectively care about climate change. We will be at the front of the line demanding action because it’s our God-given responsibility to do so. Failing to care about climate change is a failure to love. What is more Christian than to be good stewards of the planet and love our global neighbor as ourselves?”

Join First UMC’s Green Team by emailing co-chair Jim Gillison at james.gillison@msn.com. And read about the team’s ongoing work online at firstumcmissoula.org/green-team.