An ABC's for UU Climate Revival Congregations
UU Climate Justice Revival Sermon by Diego Garrido Barreto
August 2024

Dear people, mushrooms and micro beings around us. Once, in my School of Theology, someone left a thin book with a green cover. It was the ABC's for UU newcomers by William Cleary. He created this book based on "a famous old fashioned children's book, all about the abolition of slavery but organized by A, B, C's" I wonder what would look to create an ABC for those like me who are looking for a 2050 where Love keeps its center and climate justice is part of a global consciousness. This sermon has a translation in my native language Spanish because the words chosen for this ABC's fit in both languages, so that the translation respects the order and keeps its meaning. Let's start:

A is for Action. I mean movement, shout and loud, active empowerment for all bodies and for all beings, including our invisible backyard: microbial life. They are active, around us, inside our nails, in the yoghurt left in the fridge and climate change is affecting them too. Action could be learning to stop and ask them: How are they keeping up?

B is for Bio. Bio is a Greek word that means life, expansion, the bio that gives us meaning and spice to our biographies. Let's make this world a biography centered in love, including all creatures that made possible this life. Let's make a Bio that includes a graphic image of what we do and what bacteria's are doing in this adaptation.

C is for Climate and for Change. I have heard before that everything changes, but not everyone is ready. The American Society of Microbiology said that "Climate change can disrupt microbial structure, perturb production of greenhouse gases and increase prevalence of plant and animal pathogens". Microbial and cellular life made possible our lives, let's keep them alive raising awareness of their existence potential.

D is for Doubt. When governments and leaders have led us to believe change was inside this oppressive system, doubt has been helpful. I doubt millionaires will do the climate change we expect, I doubt money is the answer to mitigate it and that without mystics we can do it. Let's love doubt, don't doubt that loving this life will move us to action.

E is for Eco. Eco is, yes, another word that comes from the Greek and means house. For some, instead of being a shelter, a sanctuary or a sacred place, it has been a violent experience. Let's explore houses outside our traditions of architecture, with more trees, fountains, silent places… so that congregations can mitigate climate change providing a visible foundation for their ideas. Churches that can cooperate with microbes for 2050.

F is for Future, as palpable as cellular, as reachable as virus, breathing in Oxygen and breathing out worries. More micro and less macro. Let's stop looking like microscopes, with less cameras. Let's learn from the chaotic life of germs, bacteria, parasites, algae… Stop the capture of images, the antibacterial sensation of rejection. Less control of the climate changes and more concertation of how to make effortless changes... together.

G is for Gitanjali, the poetry book written by Rabindranath Tagore. Artist, poet and reformist related to the Unitarian Universalist tradition in Urbana, Illinois. In one of these poems he sings of a new world: "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; / Where knowledge is free; / Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; / Where words come out from the depth of truth;… Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action…" Let's change the frustration of not knowing what to do, to start dreaming our own Gitanjali "Song offerings" so that we sing the now, not the How or the What, to dream a poem of a world where microbes are as important as galaxies.

H is for Ho'oponopono, practice of reconciliation that comes from the Hawaiian tradition. It is translated as correction and a restoration of a relation. Maybe, thinking of the Earth

as an anthropomorphic being, Climate Justice could start with what the planet that is already speaking, a planet that needs us to listen in order to change. To say: I love you, forgive me, please or thank you, after I listen to the Earth's voice.

I is for Imagination. By 2050 I see a world with accessible transportation, less harmful, more harmonic; where indigenous medicines are protected, without borders or taxes. A world open to breathe greener, more eco communitarian, without scientists different than mystics, without lawyers or police. Where AI is a holistic help, not an entertainment to keep us locked in a pantheon, where neither what we leave behind (our residues) or what we make is harmful. Where the majority, bacteria, can imagine us like galaxies of flesh… and that we will act in their wellbeing.

J is for Justice, not the one that you expect from institutions, not the one that can be supernatural sourced. A justice that feels the consequences of climate change, with reparation to the harms done to the broken relations, embracing microorganisms, a justice that transforms punishment and guilt into action, justice that grieves, that echoes eco, life.

K is for Kuir and Q is for Queer. Queer has been named Kuir with K in Latinamerica as part of a decolonized search for identities that do not depend on Western definitions of otherness. Translating Kuirness is a waste of time, but when I say that Colombia has no winter is a hint. Being Kuir is like Kuzu, Kudzu, the invasive vine that has been covering native plants and buildings. Congregations can learn from Kuzu, the Kuirness of my country translated as *mata*, to mobilize slow and persistent, green and calm, to spread slowly, monstrously and contagious, epidemic and involved, parasite and healing.

L is for Liberation. The Climate needs to be free from our control and supervision, free as we replicate the microbial freedom of those who don't rule by our logics. Liberation of Celsius vs Fahrenheit, from those who have antibacterial like holy water. Liberation of capital, money, mobilizations that start by looking at the corner of our churches and communities. To the macro through the micro love in freedom.

M is for Meditation. Action and meditation connected as two. Meditation includes rest, stillness, slow pace. Climate instead doesn't meditate. Let's consider it as a form to grieve what has been drastically changed: The Aral sea, lake Urmia, lake Chad... Meditation makes easier to stop, breathe in climate and breathe out the grief of its change.

N is for Natives of bodies, climate, and a territory rather than natives limited to a border, identified and classified by a colonialism that tried to exterminate them. Our struggle is micro and macro, not national or religious, remembering I am from a nation called Colombia speaking in a different country's language. In Colombia there are 65 indigenous languages and that means 65 different wisdoms to relate to the earth and its climates. I need to find climate in the stories I was told about my territory, the climates I lived as a migrant in this foreign land, and the climate logics created by traditions outside my Judeo-Christian precedence, 65 reasons to listen wide and wider.

O is for Opportunities. Every day, now… *ahora* is another chance to do what we didn't do yesterday. To listen today. Visit the projects built around your area, listen if the bird sings less or if your skin feels an awkward warm weather… dream of a world where climate can be as connected as the heart.

P is for Practices. Our actions are made of them, our practices also means practical. Don't over saturate your lungs with unnecessary air. Don't practice without asking its purpose, act like if that practice contains the whole world in a wild berry or if that action can make it rain in Mars. That the goal of the practice, for the practice.

R is for Revival. Re-vival, to re-vive in your breathing those activists that have lived before us and that died seeking climate justice and ecological repair. Sadly, my country Colombia has been the most dangerous for leaders and climate activists. It doubles the number of Brazil while Honduras is the highest per capita. For those who have died defending their territories let them revive in your breathing.

S is for Sentient, sentient including rocks and reefs, mushrooms and seaweed, every being affected with the ongoing climate changing. For all the animals who migrate and those microbial that do not have a voice to be listen to. Each of them are sacred.

T is for Temperature. The rising warm beat when I protest and shout, the same temperature that decreases when I breathe slow. Letting all be one and multiple. Explore the ice glacier of your knees or the desert skin on your elbows, the woods of hair and the warm volcano active in your heart. Open your body to the temperature of your emotions.

U is for Urgency. Yes! This change is happening already! Its never too late to join actions that contribute to the well being of the Earth. Better sooner than tomorrow to keep that conversation. Ask your friends, your family or relatives. Check within yourself if your inner body and soul are ready, then, join those who feel that urgency, that U that is you.

V is for Vedas. I don't mean that we need to read all of these books, they are an example of an awareness… in this wisdom I found that the Ashvins, young horsemen twins, like Castor and Pollux, these twins have a chariot and they both travel between the three lokas or worlds: the earth (prithivi), the atmosphere (antariksha) and heaven (dyuloka). Wouldn't it be nice to think in our own stories and tales on how we named our earth? I will add this metaphor referring to the twin's union: "You are as intimately connected with us as clothing is connected to the coldness of winter". Metaphors are powerful… Let's think the metaphors we use as congregation to connect with our climate.

W is for Weil, Simone Weil (1909-1943), a French philosopher and theologian that once said: "God created through love and for love. God did not create anything except love itself, and the means to love. He (Them) created love in all its forms. He (Them) created beings capable of love from all possible distances." I wonder if this means that bacteria

can love… Could they be the answer? Maybe the smallest's alive gives us a better understanding of what we mean by human.

X is where the Treasure is. You may wonder, where is that treasure? Under your feet, where you step, where you stand, in the microbial life of lichens, mushrooms... It is in the action, in the future palpable and tangible. The little things you do matter.

Y is for You, in Spanish for Yo. You and I, Tú y Yo. These words were possible because I have a You, and You is no longer a human, my You tries to embrace the beings that transform bread, yoghurt and beer, beings affected and hurt by climate change, they can teach us how to act in a world where every action matters, affects and creates. Yo and You would be a symbiosis when many languages work together for this revival.

Z is for Zen. This tradition is a source to embrace emptiness, simplicity, compassion, and a silence to rest the mind: Let climate flow between detachment and rootedness, respect, veneration, gratefulness. Its change is changing with you, my reader. Thank you.

Dear congregation, let's feel the climate of love doing the rest.