



The Future We Choose: The Stubborn Optimist's Guide to the Climate Crisis
(softcover published 2021)

The Future We Choose: Surviving the Climate Crisis
(hardcover published 2020)

by Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

Note that the hardcover and softcover editions are substantively the same

Why was this book selected as the Faith to Forest community-read book?

1. The book is accessible, meaning it is relatively short and uses understandable terms. Some copies are available in Lincoln City Libraries. It's available at Francie & Finch, both Lincoln Barnes and Noble locations, and possibly Novel Idea.
2. The authors start by describing the climate crisis with two contrasting portraits of what life will be if we make or do not make changes substantial enough to prevent climate catastrophe. First, they preview earth's future if we continue to use fossil fuels as our primary source of energy, allowing the temperature to rise beyond the established tipping point. The second possible future may happen if we choose to substantially reduce carbon emissions to lower rising temperatures. Then we can share the path to a rosier, healthier future for the plants, animals, and ourselves. These contrasting portraits present the climate crisis in stark reality. Already, we have gone past some points we may never recover. We hope we can make enough changes to save ourselves. We hope to prevent a hot climate with floods, famine, and climate refugees. We cannot avoid the hard truth that we are choosing a future for our children and grandchildren.
3. If the reader wants to make choices to reduce carbon emissions, the authors provide evidence for ten strategies which will enable life as we know it. Figueres and Rivett-Carnac present reforesting the earth as one of the ten workable strategies. Many of the strategies are individual, but many are decisions to be made as communities, whether faith or other communities, and as part of public policy.
4. This book will encourage robust discussion. It is not explicitly faith-based, but discussions by faith communities will inevitably include references to sacred texts and faith community teachings and values.

How have the authors established their credibility?

Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac are recognized as the architects of the Paris Agreement which proposed measurable goals to ensure our planet's survival as we know it.

Together, their leadership and vision led them to establish Global Optimism, an organization that gives hope to our human capacity and accountability as we find a path to earth's renewal. Check them out at globaloptimism.com. Although our global politicians, local and state governments, and industrial leaders have been unable to act within the limits set by the 2015 Paris Agreement, it remains a recognized standard, a measuring stick, for addressing climate change.

What do other recognized authors say about the role of trees in our path to earth's resilience and survival?

Most climate change experts acknowledge that no one strategy will save the earth's climate. We must use a collage of strategies. Saving our existing trees and replacing lost trees is one strategy that contributes to our survival. Gates (2021) posits that the earth does not have enough space for the number of trees required to balance the carbon emission challenge. Yet, the Faith to Forest initiative focuses on tree retention and replacement as one strategy of the big picture solution to earth's survival. Trees can be part of the solution, just as the technological breakthroughs in solar or wind electrical energy storage batteries will be another part of the solution. Every bit of solution has a significant role to play.

Johnson and Wilkerson (2020) introduce the term "silver pastures" of closed loop farming by which the natural processes of several living things including trees in a shared space (meadow, hillside, mountain top or valley) collectively absorb approximately two metric tons of carbon per acre a year. This regenerative practice is part of our agricultural heritage and uses the natural process of decomposition to nurture the soil. Also, the practice results in less disturbance of the soil and is effective for building the earth's resilience, especially when practiced with crop rotation and cover crops to minimize loss of top soil.

Tallamy (2021, 2019) argues that our own individual yards can yield a positive impact on climate change. He stresses the value of native trees over non-native, introduced species. Native trees, native insects, and native birds have evolved together; this has resulted in essential bonds for health and sustainability to all flora and fauna in the cycle as well as to planet earth. Although Gates suggests that the earth does not have enough ground space for trees to make a difference, Tallamy takes a different view by suggesting we make intentional choices for sustainability in our own yards.

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer (2013) names the three sisters of grains, vegetables, and fruits. Many of our fruits grow on trees; we must recognize the nutritional value trees have for sustaining life. By producing fruits and nuts. While trees are nurturing the earth, they are also nurturing birds, insects, wild animals, and us. Trees contribute to the "rewilding" of a flourishing natural cycle of growth, decay, and new growth.

Even novelists have taken their pens and computer keyboards to address climate change. Millet asked how one generation can cope with the failures of previous generations in her fictional

novel *A Children's Bible*. In another novel, Richard Powers focuses on saving trees and all living things in *The Overstory*. How can fiction be important in considering climate change? To quote Powers "The best arguments in the world won't change a person's mind. The only thing that can do that is a good story."

In summary

Faith to Forest invites you to join in reading and discussing *The Future We Choose*. You are also invited to discuss climate change in-person or via Zoom with other members and friends. Check with your faith community to see if a discussion is scheduled, and if not, offer to host one, using the discussion guide to make the role of facilitator easy. There may be some other community discussion groups. Book clubs will find it a great discussion book.

Take advantage of two opportunities for a community discussion of the book and trees. Lincoln City Libraries Director Pat Leach and State Climatologist Martha Shulski will discuss the book from 7-8 pm, Thursday, February 3 via Zoom. On Saturday, February 5 at 2 pm, Pat Leach will be joined by two city officials to discuss how Lincoln is using trees to combat climate change and create for a more livable, equitable city.

References

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Powers, R. *The Overstory*. (2018). New York: W. W. Norton & Co. (p. 336).

Tallamy, D. *The nature of oaks: The rich ecology of our most essential native trees*. (2021). Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Tallamy, D. *Nature's best hope: A new approach to conservation that starts in your backyard*. (2019). Portland, OR: Timber Press.

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