

Building a Charge

The gift of an electric vehicle charging station

by Adam Conley



AN ELECTRIC vehicle (EV) charging station in Saint Mark's Cathedral's north parking lot is now open to the community. Located not far from the Peace Pole with its multi-lingual invitation to world peace, the EV station is a visible manifestation of the cathedral's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

On June 20, the station was dedicated in loving memory of longtime parishioner Jim Mulligan. Together with former Saint Mark's clergy The Rev. Carla V. Pryne (then The Rev. Canon Carla V. Berkedal), Jim and Ruth Mulligan were founders of Earth Ministry, a local non-profit that grew out of what is now called the Creation Care ministry at the cathedral. Earth Ministry has been "a national leader in engaging the faith community in environmental stewardship and advocacy"¹ for nearly three decades.

The story of Jim Mulligan and Earth Ministry is by extension the story of Saint Mark's role as an early leader in the movement to make care for the environment a vocal and visible priority for many communities of faith. An ordained Presbyterian minister, Jim was a marriage and family therapist before serving as Executive Director of Earth Ministry for many years. His passion for the earth was rooted in deep spiritual convictions. He believed that being made in the image of God was a mandate to love creation with the Creator's love. If humanity has dominion over the rest of the created order, it bears a profound responsibility for respect and stewardship, not subjugation and destruction.

Jim and Ruth Mulligan were married at Saint Mark's in 1982. In 1987, they went with another couple on a kayaking trip along the Dease River through the majestic untouched wilds of northern British Columbia. This was a transformative spiritual experience for them both, but especially for Jim, who felt a clear and distinctive call to refocus his own ministry and vocation in service of the sacredness of creation.

A year or so after the Dease River trip, the Mulligans traveled with Rev. Pryne and others to Ocean Shores, WA, to help clean sea birds covered in oil from a devastating spill. This trip inspired the three of them, in 1989, to form the ministry that has become Creation Care. In her eulogizing remarks at Jim Mulligan's memorial service at Saint Mark's in

2019, Rev. Pryne said, "We called this new endeavor the Ecology/Spirituality group... The work resonated with people, church and unchurched, quickly and deeply. One Saint Mark's parishioner told me: 'I've been waiting for this all my life.'"²

The current executive director at Earth Ministry is LeeAnne Beres, who also offered personal reflections on the life and person of Jim Mulligan at his memorial in 2019. "There are people in this world who hold the center for those around them," she said. "Their lives knit together families, communities, parishes, even ecosystems. They are healers and teachers. Jim was one of these people."³

Holding the center for Jim Mulligan was Ruth. Beres went on to say that "Jim's loving partnership with Ruth was an integral part of what made him the visionary leader, administrator, and committed environmentalist that we all knew. Ruth's wisdom, nurturing, and vision of an Earth that is healed and whole has been a gift to all of us...and especially Jim. They were a perfect team."

Jim wasn't one for public recognition, but Ruth thinks he'd still get a kick out of having his name on Saint Mark's new EV charging station. "He was such an innovative spirit," she says. "He'd be glad to know that in addition to the many unseen projects Creation Care has done and is doing, something visible, exciting, and new like the EV station might capture the imagination and enthusiasm of not just the people of Saint Mark's, but others in the community committed to reducing their carbon footprint."

Indeed, community is what is behind the Mulligans' story of perseverance. No matter how bad the news can get when it comes to the environment, Jim and Ruth knew they were far from alone. "Addressing a concern with other people—sharing a vision of something greater than ourselves, that for Jim, and for me, is true joy." ♦

1 <https://www.earthministry.org/about/>

2 Berkedal Pryne, The Rev. Carla. "Remembrance for Jim Mulligan," Seattle, March 9, 2019

3 Beres, LeeAnne. "Jim Mulligan Memorial Service," Seattle, March 9, 2019



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ABOUT THE E.V. CHARGING STATION

The public is welcome to charge electric vehicles at the station via the ChargePoint app: **chargepoint.com**. Saint Mark's Cathedral will provide up to two hours of electrical charge at no cost to the user. Users are responsible for charging costs incurred beyond two hours. This charging policy is subject to change to ensure equitable access.

BELOW LEFT: a nature photograph taken by Jim Mulligan; RIGHT, TOP: Jim and Ruth Mulligan, from the Saint Mark's Parish Directory of 1990, and the Mulligans in more recent times.

