My name is Betty Holley and I am a pastor and presiding elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I’m also a Professor of Practical Theology at Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio. And I just want to present how I imagine the human future relative to the ethics for the Anthropocene. (00:46) All reflections about future consequences belonging to the sphere of morality. Morality is concerned with how the present can be of instrumental value for the future. We as members of the earth society have a collective challenge no previous civilization has ever faced. Without pillage and plundering of Earth’s valuable resources, we have almost become the mind and heart of the universe. Through climate change and other environment issues and problems, we have profoundly altered our planet through symbolic consciousness. (01:20) We must become concerned with how we can become instrumental in our action to preserving the future of our only home, Earth. Our survival and future wellbeing are dependent upon an ability to develop and to live in accordance with shared ethical values between humankind and non-humankind. We need to create an ethical framework to be able to build a new world planetary civilization of many nations, diverse cultures, and different races founded on common ethical principles. Including for example, mutual respect, justice, compassion, gender equality, but prepriatory democracy, economic equity, tolerance, environmental protection, cooperation and peace. And in my opinion, when I read Dale’s book, the green virtues definitely offer a ethical framework to start thinking ethically about our plight. (02:23) Also, I’ve thought about my work with the Earth Charter. The Earth Charter Initiative began back in 1987 and was finalized in 2000. And I was privileged to participate in some of the initial work of this charter through serving on the National Council of Churches, and also through my environmental organization that served
as a clearing house for disseminating information to congregations in my denomination, which is African Methodist Episcopal, relative to environmental issues and problems. (02:57) And when we took the Earth Charter to our summit, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 to Rio, we were hoping that the 175 nations would agree to this document and look at it as a way forward toward a global ethic. But the time was just not right. So through several revisions and work of the Earth Charter, it became into the final revision in 2000. (03:27) The Earth Charter helps us to align our consciousness with the cosmos, because it intersects positively with ethical concerns of ecumenical Christianity. The charter contains spiritual affirmations about the community of life and the human role they’re in that are congruent with biblical theological things. For example, the first sentences of the Earth Charter preamble, second paragraph announced, humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community. (04:03) The Earth Charter is both a document and a movement. It draws on scientific knowledge, legal principles, sustainability practices, ecological economics, and equity issues. International agencies, such as the United Nations, have endorsed it. It is also endorsed by thousands of individuals and groups, and by a number of countries and cities. The Charter points toward an integrated framework of ecology, justice and peace as a context for sustainable development. With the Charter, it can be said that the ethical compass of the human is expanded. But this is not only a document for claim of the interdependence of humans, but also a movement that celebrates our interdependence with one another and with the entire earth community. (04:55) I use the Earth Charter in classes I teach at Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio, to actively engage my pastors in understanding ethical general principles that the Charter entails. The Charter entails several principles. Number one, respect and care for the community of life. Number two, ethological integrity. Number three, social and economic justice. And number four, democracy, non-violence and peace. This helps them, the pastors of course, to teach and preach about such things as climate change, to reorient their congregations to see Earth as their home, thereby
enhancing their development on relations and solidarity with particular places, people and lifeforms jeopardized by inappropriate development or environmental injustices. (05:51) In my Episcopal district, which includes the states of Ohio, West Virginia, and the Western part of Pennsylvania, our Bishop established the initiative entitled, Living Well, in each of our annual conferences, which I aided in developing, using the ethical framework that is interwoven into our summit. (06:13) Also, my denomination is in the beginning stages of green in the denomination, as last general conference established a mission statement for greening the African Methodist Episcopal Church using the moral framework of the Earth Charter. It also echoes, as I read through Dale's book, the green virtues. (06:35) In the last thought, I'd just like to say that we as humankind, we're trying to navigate our way between scientific accounts of evolution and the multiple religious stories of creation. The Earth Charter articulates a broad, simple, and inclusive sensibility that Earth is our home. Thank you.