

**Video Transcript:** *Waters That Hold Us* — Rev. David Valera

The waters of the Puget Sound tell stories. Stories of Salmon who return year after year. Stories of canoes that have traveled those waters for generations.

Stories of industry, of shipping, of pollution, and stories of resilience.

When I stand by these waters, I hear echoes of another sea, the ocean that surrounded my home in the islands of the Philippines. The waves that nurtured me and in a way carried me here, and in their rhythm I hear the call of God.

I was born in a place where the sea was both livelihood and danger, where the islands depended on the rhythms of the tides. The sea shaped us, fed us, tested us, and even scattered us.

Like many others, I left the islands in search of a new place to call home.

My journey brought me to the Pacific Northwest, where I now live and work near and around the Puget Sound; familiar yet new.

The same waters that once separated me from my family now connect me to a greater community. Life taught me that the sea does not divide. It actually holds us together.

Scripture tells us that creation is not ours to exploit, but God's gift for us to nurture. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

Yet here, in the Puget Sound, we see what happens when we forget. Orcas struggle because salmon runs are disappearing. The waters hold toxins that harm our children. Rising seas remind us that the Earth itself is crying out.

As an immigrant, I see both loss and hope in these waters. I know what it means to leave behind a troubled homeland and to long for it to be healed.

Creation care is not just science. It is discipleship.

It is justice.

It is our love for the next generation.

The Puget Sound teaches me that my story is not separate from the story of this land and its waters. The Salmon's struggle is my struggle.

The rising seas are not just numbers in the report. They are the same waves that once embraced and molded my island home.

To care for the sound is to care for the Philippines, for the Pacific Islands, for the many islands still unnamed, for every place where the waters rise and threaten life.

Creation is not bound by borders, and neither is God's call.

The waters carry us—our grief, our memories, our hopes. They carry God's voice—a call to remember, a call to restore, a call to love.

So may we listen, may we act, and may these waters from the islands of my birth to the shores of the Puget Sound remind us that we belong to God and to each other. We are earthkeepers.