

Annual Report

The Bishop's Environmental Commission

This past fiscal year was a time for both contemplation and action lived out within the environment of our diocese. The effects of the Coronavirus proved to be both a blessing and a time of trial and challenge. We were given the opportunity to slow down and notice God's compassionate presence all around us, while working through the disorientation of our lives caused by this global pandemic which continues to beset us.

Contemplation

I, (Deacon Joey) was able to participate in a year long certificate program offered by the Center for Religion and Environment in Sewanee, Tn. The program, Contemplation and Care for Creation is taught by the faculty from The University of the South and facilitated through the guide "Living In An Icon," a program for growing closer to Creation and to God. This enabled me to create relationships with the faculty from CRE who have offered to enter into a consultative relationship with our diocese aimed at facilitating discussions with our clergy and lay leaders to develop an action plan to ***en-culturate the care for creation into the everyday life and mission of our diocese.***

Action

The Environmental Commission met almost exclusively via zoom throughout the year on a bimonthly basis to check in with each other and determine how to be of service to each other and to the community throughout the pandemic. Here are a few of our activities in and around the diocese:

Advocacy

Through our association with Helen Rose Patterson, outreach coordinator with Restore the Mississippi River Delta, several of our members;

Participated in in-district meetings with state legislators.

We submitted community feedback for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and attended council meetings on the same.

A group of Commission members presented as part of the 2021 State of the Coast Conference in June.

One of our commission members, Andrew Wilson, is an environmental lawyer who:

Wrote and/or participated in writing three resolutions for (and which were all passed by) the Louisiana Wildlife Federation

Wrote a comment on behalf of the Orleans Audubon Society (OAS) opposing and seeking a public hearing on a LDEQ air permit which would double the tonnage of noxious chemicals released by (for) a facility located next to the Peveto Woods Bird & Butterfly (a) Sanctuary in Cameron, La.;

Wrote an article for the OAS Ibis newsletter opposing the construction of a 15 story high rise condominium proposed for West End Park by the New Basin Canal at the New Orleans lakefront which would cause harmful environmental effects to the Canal and present a hazard to migratory birds which often strike large windows in such structures.

Is investigating an unexplained die-off of oysters in Barataria Bay in January, 2021, which could not have been caused by natural events.

Eliminate Environmental Racism

We participated with the CRCL over two weekends to bag oyster shells and then to deploy them around the sacred mounds of the Atakapas-Ishak/Chawasha tribe in Grand Bayou.

Participated in marches in St. James Parish to come along side and stand with the people who live in Cancer Alley and to fight against the opening of a new Formosa plant which threatens to double toxic pollutants which have led to high cancer rates among the poor people of color who live along that corridor.

Participated with the Louisiana Bucket Brigade in events to stop industrial pollution and environmental racism.

Season of Creation 2021

We Introduced the annual Season of Creation celebration to the diocese. The Season of Creation, September 1st through October 4th, is celebrated

by Christians around the world as a time for renewing, repairing and restoring our relationship to God, one another, and all of creation. This year's theme is ***A Home For All? Renewing the Oikos of God.*** More information for planning your participation in the Season of Creation 2022 can be found at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/season-of-creation-and-st-francis-day-resources/>

The World Resources Institute

The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana was selected as one of only six dioceses in the United States to participate in the "WRI ***Faith and Sustainability Initiative*** which supports existing and new faith-based sustainability projects and enables faith-based communities to build capacity for community-level solutions. We will begin the roll out of this initiative throughout the diocese in November.

Respectfully submitted,

Deacon Joey
Chair - The Bishop's Environmental Commission