

Environmental Commission Report - Outline of Activities Fiscal 2021/22

Bishop Thompson asked us to reflect on this theme for our 2022 Diocesan Convention - "Always We Begin Again." As we thought back to the beginning of our church year in 2021, we were able to see how we did "Begin Again" in faith to respond to God's call as The Bishop's Environmental Commission for Creation Care.

Ministry question: How is our Ministry Shaping Our Future?
Our ministry shapes our future to becoming One With God, One With our Neighbor, and One With all of God's Creation.

"Creating a mutually enhancing relationship with the natural world requires a profound change of mind; one simple thing: to recognize that the planet earth and the universe are primary and humans are derivative."

- Thomas Berry

Activities of the Environmental Commission:

- We began a dialogue, in November of 2021, with the World Resources Institute (WRI) joining a collaboration with them in their Faith & Sustainability Initiative. The Diocese of Louisiana was one of six dioceses chosen by the Episcopal Church to be involved in this initiative.
- We also began working with The Center for Religion and Environment (now The Center for Deep Green Faith) in a collaborative relationship to help us begin to see the relationship between creation care and the church.
- Subsequent to initiating our collaborations with both groups, the Environmental Commission members created a Vision Statement for a Seven Year Action Plan: "To cultivate the care of God's creation in the daily lives of the people, churches and communities in which we live, move and have our being."

- We participated in the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) Annual Public Meeting at the Jefferson Parish Council Chambers. Deacon Joseph Clavijo, our commission chairman, offered our support to the council for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion.
- In late January of 2022, commission members participated in the UNO Tree Planting event.
- In early February, Environmental Commission members met with WRI via Zoom about ways to add scope to Sustain Island Home within our diocese and to determine actionable activities to respond to the threat of climate change and environmental racism within the diocese.
- Along with Pastor Gregory Manning from The Greater New Orleans Interfaith Climate Commission (GNOICC), we participated in the Tulane Environmental Law Summit, March 11-12, 2022, to discuss ways in which environmental groups, consisting of interfaith members from around the community, can work with government to advocate for creation care and heal the suffering from environmental racism.
- In March, Environmental Commission members met with representatives of The Center for Deep Green Faith, via Zoom, to begin our work by deciding what we wanted to accomplish. From there, we scheduled a series of webinars for the commission members to come together to discern the work of creation care within the church.
- Commission members created and distributed the “Lenten Fast for Creation - Lent 2022”. The Lenten Calendar was distributed throughout the Diocese of Louisiana as well as our interfaith connections throughout Louisiana. The Lenten Fast for Creation Calendar offered daily creation care recommendations we all can use to care for the environment.

- Charmaine Kathmann, Penny Dralle and Joseph Clavijo created a trifold showing creation care work in the Episcopal Church. They used this information when they represented the diocese at the City Park Spring Garden Show, in early April of 2022, in New Orleans.
- Members of the Environmental Commission, along with Rev. Fred Devall, attended the annual Coastal Day at the Louisiana State Legislature on April 5, in Baton Rouge. We met with legislators and the members of the Governor's Climate Task Force. The Task Force is responsible for leading the effort to meet the Governor's plan for the State of Louisiana to become Net Carbon Neutral by 2050 and to reach 40%-50% Carbon Neutrality by 2030.
- Environmental Commission members attended five webinars with the Center for Deep Green Faith on April 5, 12, 19, 26 and May 3 to assist us in our Deep Green Faith work in the diocese, which we hope to begin in December of 2022.
- Environmental Commission members Joseph Clavijo, Penny Dralle and Bart Reilly helped organize and stage the Earth Day Interfaith Celebration at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in New Orleans. Bishop Thompson, Catholic Archbishop Aymond, and a number of other interfaith leaders from the New Orleans area, gathered together for an ecumenical prayer service on April 22.
- In May of this year, while Deacon Joseph Clavijo was on the board of Grace at the Green Light, St. Anna's Episcopal Church, with help from Grace at the Green Light, installed a Water Hydration Station. The idea was born from the need to have water available for the unhoused community, so the water would be more convenient and available on demand for this community as well as environmentally sustainable. In the past, Grace at the Green Light would endeavor to supply water by taking bottled water out to the community. Now, they supply reusable water bottles with their logo to assist their guests in using the hydration stations in neighborhoods around the city.
- Environmental Commission members attend a second series of webinars presented by The Center for Deep Green Faith on "Praying the Lords Prayer with All Creatures" on June 2, 9, 16, and 23.

- In June, during their meeting at the Solomon Conference Center, Environmental Commission members met with the representatives of The Center for Deep Green Faith, via Zoom, to develop plans for incorporating Deep Green Faith formation throughout the diocese.
- Commission members Penny Dralle and Bart Reilly are participating with The Center for Deep Green Faith in a 12-month Certificate Program entitled Contemplation and Care for Creation which began on June 15, 2022.
- Commission member Molly Blackwell has taken a lead role in the development of a meditation garden at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge. The garden has become a place of contemplative prayer, meditation, and listening for God in the natural world, for those who visit there.
- In August, Joseph Clavijo and Penny Dralle participated, via Zoom, in the Deep Green Faith online offering by Rev. Jerry Cappel on "Deep Green Church: Living the Whole Gospel."
- Commission member Riley Steinbrenner organized a group of volunteers to work with the Pontchartrain Conservancy to help at the Bucktown Tree Nursery on July 30.
- With the help and support of Rev. Canon Allison Reid, we reintroduced the Season of Creation Liturgy to clergy members of the diocese. The Liturgy is available to be used in parishes in the diocese during September and October of 2022.
- The commission continues to seek and to build collaborative work relationships with other commissions and ministries within the diocese.

Respectfully submitted,

Environmental Commission Members,

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