

2022-23 Environmental Commission Report for the 2023 Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

Introduction: Bishop Duckworth asked us to reflect on the theme of our 2023 Diocesan Convention- “Faith Amplified.” As we reflected on our work as a commission during 2022-23, we were able to see how our work in God’s Creation resulted in “Faith Amplified” in response to God’s call as the Bishop’s Commission for Creation Care.

Ministry Question: How is our ministry shaping our future? God’s ministry works through us. We are all called to Creation Care, Racial Healing and Evangelism, so that we’re One With God, One With our Neighbor, and One With all of God’s Creation.

“I used to think that the top global environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that with thirty years of good science we could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation.”

– James Gustav Speth, co-founder, National Resources Defense Council and founder, World Resources Institute.

So, with that in mind, here are some of the Environmental Commission’s accomplishments during 2022 and 2023:

- A presentation, on behalf of the commission, by Penny Dralle and Deacon Charmaine Kathmann at the 2023 New Orleans City Park Flower Show.
- In December, Environmental Commission members met and worked with Bishop Shannon Duckworth and representatives of the Commission for Racial Healing and the Youth Ministry of the diocese, under the facilitation of staff members from the Center for Deep Green Faith, to examine ways these ministries could work together more effectively.
- Along with the members of the Commission for Racial Healing and the Youth Ministry, the Environmental Commission members read two books prior to their next meeting in February: *Loving Creation* by Kathleen Fischer and *The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning* by Catherine Meeks.
- Commission members examined potential involvement in the World Resources Institute (WRI) Science-Based Targets for Change program focused primarily on assisting churches and schools to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.
- Bishop Duckworth endorsed our commission’s recommendation to base the EDOLA 2023 Lenten Calendar on the “Who is my neighbor” work by The Rev. Robin Denney of Episcopal Relief and Development.

- In late February, members of the Environmental Commission attended the follow-up meeting of the EDOLA Joint Commission (Environmental, Racial Healing, and Youth Ministries) at the Solomon Episcopal Conference Center, where the participants worked on finding a common language that all three ministries could use to bring commission members together.
- Following the Joint Commission Meeting on February 24, the members of the Environmental Commission held a planning session to focus their work, based on the results from the previous meeting.
- In March, Deacon Charmaine Kathmann presented to the Metairie Ridge Garden Clubs on behalf of the Environmental Commission.
- Based on a recommendation by commission member Riley Steinbrenner, commission members agreed to read and discuss *Our Father's World*, beginning with our April meeting.
- Bart Reilly, Acting Chair of the Commission, contacted representatives of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia Creation Care Committee to learn more about their work in forming "Green Teams" throughout their diocese.
- Mr. Reilly attended the Internet-based Episcopal Church Creation Care Grant Information Webinar on March 14, and reported the results of what he had learned to the Environmental Commission members.
- Commission member Molly Blackwell, a parishioner at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge, enlisted young people at her church in assisting in a neighborhood cleanup effort.
- On March 31 and April 1 and 2, Commission members Penny Dralle and Deacon Charmaine Kathmann exhibited on behalf of the commission at the New Orleans City Park's Annual Garden Show.
- Commission member Molly Blackwell and other parishioners from St. Margaret's Church planned a tree planting for Earth Day Sunday.
- Commission members Penny Dralle, Deacon Charmaine Kathman and Bart Reilly represented the Environmental Commission at the EDOLA Joint Commission meeting on May 13, at St. George's Church in New Orleans. Joint Commission members worked together on dialogue, formation, and building relationships, using the words of the Magnificat (Song of Mary) to assist in this process.
- Mr. Reilly attended the World Resources Institute's (WRI) Science-based Targets for Faith and Sustainability: Colloquium Report webcast on Friday, May 12. He reported his findings and observations to the Environmental Commission at its May meeting.
- Bart Reilly attended a Diocese of Virginia Creation Care Committee webcast featuring The Rev. Pete Nunnally, Sr., Senior Associate Rector at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Arlington, VA, discussing his founding of the Wilderness Church service in his parish.
- Penny Dralle, Bart Reilly, and Deacon Joey Clavijo met with Bishop Shannon Duckworth to review and discuss the 2023 Season of Creation Liturgy.

- Deacon Charmaine Kathmann represented the EDOLA Environmental Commission at the State of the Coast conference in New Orleans in early June.
- Commission member Molly Blackwell began her participation in the 2023 Cohort in the Contemplation and Care for Creation year-long training program with the Center for Deep Green Faith.
- After a year of study with the Center for Deep Green Faith, Penny Dralle and Bart Reilly graduated with the 2022 Cohort from the Contemplation and Care for Creation training program.
- Molly Blackwell led a children's summer camp group in nature-related activities at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge.
- At St. Margaret's, Ms. Blackwell continued her work on forging a creation care-based partnership with representatives from St. George's Catholic Church in Baton Rouge.
- Molly Blackwell and her Creation Care group at St. Margaret's in Baton Rouge planned for a Creation Care bulletin board, fall planting at the church and a Go Green movement as part of their activities for the Season of Creation in 2023.
- Bishop Shannon Duckworth approved a Season of Creation Ecumenical Prayer Service at St. George's Church on September 12.
- St. Margaret's Church created a Season of Creation page on the church website.
- Based on the training they received from the Center for Deep Green Faith, Penny Dralle and Bart Reilly, with approval of and support from The Rev. Stephanie Fox, started a Creation Care training group for parishioners at St. George's Church.
- On behalf of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, the Environmental Commission, in conjunction with the Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans successfully conducted the first Season of Creation Ecumenical Prayer Service in the diocese at St. George's Episcopal Church on Tuesday, September 12. The Rev. Stephen Craft, who chairs the Ecumenical Commission for the diocese and serves as the Rector at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church in New Orleans, did an excellent job in developing the Order of Service. Mother Stephanie Fox, The Rector at St. George's Episcopal Church, hosted the prayer service. They were joined by clerical representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints in conducting the prayer service. Penny Dralle and Bart Reilly offered a brief Creation Care-related reflection during the prayer service. All who attended seemed to really enjoy the Season of Creation Liturgy and the creation-related hymns during the service.

The Environmental Commission continues to seek and to build collaborative work relationships with other commissions and ministries within the diocese.