

The Episcopal Dioceses of Rhode Island Creation Care Taskforce 2019 Report

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Prepared By: Chris Schillaci, Chair

Background: The Episcopal Dioceses of Rhode Island Creation Care Taskforce is a group appointed by Diocesan Council for the purpose of responding to 2018 General Convention resolutions on the priority of Creation Care in all our churches.

The work of the Creation Care Taskforce (CCTF) is ongoing. The CCTF met three times in 2019 to discuss strategies to achieve the 2018 General Convention resolutions on the priority of Creation Care. Outside of CCTF meetings, members met with individual parishioners and clergy from across the Diocese, members of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts Creation Care Team, representatives of environmental advocacy groups (Roger Williams Zoo, Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Environmental Council RI...), Staff at academic institutions (RWU and URI), state and local leaders, and state regulatory agencies (RI-DEM, RI-EMA). The Chair met with staff from the National Episcopal Church Reconciliation, Justice and Creation Care team to discuss efforts in other state's and Provinces, and participated in a workshop on climate change communication hosted by Members of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts Creation Care Team and led by members of the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI). A more detailed summary of actions to-date and proposed actions moving forward are provided below.

Actions To-Date: The CCTF held its first meeting on April 2, 2019, at Assumption in Rumford. The second meeting was held on May 21, 2019 at St. Luke's in East Greenwich. The third meeting was held on July 30, 2019 at St. Luke's in East Greenwich. Thanks to Rev. Jennifer Zogg and Deacon Chris Cassels for hosting meetings, Rick Sellers for presenting on the ECC solar project, and the members of the Taskforce that have participated in CCTF meetings.

At CCTF meetings the Resolutions approved at the 2018 Convention were reviewed and discussions centered on implementation strategies at multiple levels (individual, church-wide, diocesan wide). The CCTF felt strongly that empowering congregants and clergy in individual parishes was the key to forwarding and sustaining the Creation Care resolution objectives beyond the life of the Taskforce. The group recognized that the historic nature of many church buildings, local zoning, and community character would mean variability in the way each church implemented the resolutions (e.g. solar panels and community gardens may not work for many churches), but felt that there are some things all churches within the Dioceses can do with guidance and direction. The CCTF felt identifying key individuals in each church (“Creation Stewards”) and providing them with information, support, and guidance was the best means of encouraging each church in the Diocese to respond to the resolutions in a manner consistent with the realities of the individual church. The CCTF also felt that there were a number of actions that could happen at the Diocesan level to encourage clergy to incorporate Care for Creation into liturgy, incentivize sustainable capital improvements and practices, help churches prepare for the effects of climate changes, and to generally ensure that as a Diocese we are operating in a manner consistent with the 2018 General Convention resolutions on the priority of Creation Care, and in-line with the vision and call to action of the Presiding Bishop and the resolutions of the 79th General Convention of the National Church.

Proposed Actions: There are many great examples of how our Diocesan leadership, Clergy, individual congregants, and churches are taking actions consistent with the resolutions on the Care for Creation adopted at the 2018 General Convention. However, we should always strive to do even more to take action and be leaders in the effort to address the ongoing degradation of God’s Creation and to help the people and places that are in peril as a result. The CCTF has begun the development of an outline for a Diocesan-wide Care for Creation Vision and Call to Action to be shared with, and hopefully adopted by, the Diocesan Council. This document would provide guidance and encouragement for parishioners, Clergy, Vestry members, and community leaders on ways to take action and advocate for the protection of the environment and care for all of God’s Creation. We propose to continue the development of this document.

Before such a vision and call to action can be put forward, the CCTF feels we must first broaden the conversation within the Diocese. The CCTF is proposing to host a workshop in Winter/Spring 2020 to provide an opportunity for members of the Diocese to share and learn about what efforts are already underway across the Diocese, and to provide participants with information they can take back to their churches to help forward the objectives of the Care for Creation Resolutions. The workshop will provide participants with expert information on means of increasing energy efficiency in our churches and homes, climate change communication and science, the development of partnerships and ways to help make a difference in their communities, actions individuals and churches can take to prepare and increase the resiliency our communities for the impacts of climate change, and more. The workshop will allow us to benefit from the ideas, experience, and energy that parishioners from around the Dioceses can bring to this effort, help to identify individuals across the Diocese (Creation Stewards) with skills and interest to implement strategies within their individual parishes and community, and help to inform the development of a Diocesan wide strategy. We have a commitment from scientific experts, legislators, educators, state agency staff, clergy and others to assist with the workshop.

Appendix:

Meeting Minutes

CREATION CARE TASK FORCE

Gathering at The Church of the Epiphany Rumford

April 2, 2019, 6 – 8 pm

OPENING GRACE & WELCOME by Jennifer

REVIEW of CHARGE:

At our 228th Convention a resolution on creation care was passed. This is the revised version: **“To establish a creation care task force for congregations to monitor/ study the General Convention creation care resolutions.”**

Can Creation Care Task force be a resource? How can it incentivize for energy conservation (i.e., through Solar program at ECC?)

We identified 3 areas of priority:

Education/Worship

Practical implementation

Advocacy

These can be applied at the individual, parish and diocesan levels.

Discussion of priorities/practicalities/ observations (n no particular order):

Flooding – and infrastructure in RI with sea level rise – some of our properties and buildings will be critically impacted. Technology will not fix this reality.

Horror of the plastic in the ocean in the Ocean State – This we can fix! Again – not a technological issue, banning plastic straws and single use plastic bags is a start – recommendation for all parishes and at diocesan events?

Requires lifestyle changes.

Identify most vulnerable areas in diocesan and work in those neighborhoods.

Support local practices.

Energy audits – economics piece is compelling.

Compost programs- (NB: Anita has forwarded to the group information about the program in RI as featured at the “Wasted” film showing April 1 in Newport)

What is being done in education institutions like ECC and St Georges?

Discussion about the solar farm plan at ECC/planting tree as well sensitivity around solar and use of the land as it has been seen in communities throughout RI (I.e., Exeter, Kingstown).

Use of undeveloped church land for agricultural biodiversity.

Beekeeping, butterfly garden – GO BETH!!

Emphasis on Theological/scriptural teachings.

Support Worship and Liturgy (Jennifer’s Holy Hikes also featured in the RISEN magazine).

Earth Day resources.

Call for found objects – display at diocesan convention.

Invitation to Beach day with youth groups.

Lobby – letters of support.

Creation Care Road show.

Earth Day liturgies.

At midpoint in the meeting we made individual introductions

NEXT STEPS:

Chris and Anita to look at energy audits for parishes - what has been done; what is out there for our diocese

Beth to send information on beach ball to Jennifer (Done!)

Jennifer to begin list of "10 things you can do" for further diocesan publication or diocesan newsletter - Kudos all around on the RISEN on the practical and good news of all that is springing forth in the diocese on creation care!

REMINDER TO ALL - Earth Day is Easter Monday .

Jennifer will get out a simple prayer and reminder "notice" together for the Diocesan E-news about upcoming Earth Day.

Anita to speak to the Bishop about urging clergy to preach twice a year on Creation Care as well as Creation Care being a theme for Leadership Institute

CLOSING PRAYER by Buddhist Stephanie Kaza from *Earth Prayers from Around the World* collection

CREATION CARE TASK FORCE

Gathering at St Luke's, East Greenwich

May 21, 2019

OPENING PRAYER

Refreshments by Deacon Chris Cassels.

I. Brief bios of those present: Anita, Rick, David

Anita: Inspiration by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

Rick: Next thing beyond sustainability– **regeneration** – Circularity

David: push for policy change: advocacy – Make recommendations to diocese

Jennifer Zogg: member of Diocesan Council, always been involved in creation care

Beth Sherman: child of nature; vicar at St Augustine's, most progressive parish in the diocese; how do we go deeper at St Augustine's – advocacy! How to help things to shift?

Chris Cassels: Deacon at St Luke's, connected to creation care in RI through a field placement assignment at RI Interfaith Power & Light.

Question: diocesan level - How can we go deeper?

II. Presentation by Rick Sellers, sustainability advisor to the diocese and member of Emmanuel, Newport

Is it a project or is it a program?

ECC plan begun in 2017 – ideas – solar farm; hydroponics at ECC

How can I offset 20 tons of carbon a year?

WATER USE

ECC Plan utilizes about 50 acres (out of 186 acres)

Solar panels can last 40 years; contract with NG will be for 25 (with 3, 4 year extensions)

Can be up to 350 expected non-profit off-takers

Project at ECC checks all the boxes

Program:

Need land to site more solar and need a story

Community Solar – would allow going out to all Episcopal families in diocese, akin to Center for Reconciliation connecting to all parishes with a liaison

III. ACTION STEPS:

Task force invite Bill McKibben to be Convention speaker, David to send link to us about a recent article? (Jennifer's list at 13) send to Dave Seifert

Invite Chris Schillaci to chair Creation Task Force (*Anita will speak to Bishop; this is his invitation, not the task force's*)

Seminar with interfaith leaders – hold on that; not a mandate from Council

Solar project/program – Make presentation to communities i.e, St Augustine's
Or buy land –Tiverton?

With towns, have ordinances to allow this to go through?

Community Solar – members of a parish buying solar;

Diocesan learn & Lead – options of creation care relative to solar care: WAY OF LOVE:
Reconciliation

Diocesan – sea level rise audit on all our churches and other effects of climate change;
program that would engage (*Pam Rubinoff*) Anita to give Beth contact

Rick suggested going first to St Augustine's to try first before talking to the Bishop..

Recommendation to Rick: Add the positive impact of saving money in solar

CREATION CARE TASK FORCE

Gathering at St Luke's, East Greenwich

July 30, 2019

OPENING PRAYER

Refreshments provided by Chris Schillaci

Brief intro to new members: Ann Boyer and Mattie Gustafson

Chris: Discussion of meeting with Bishop on resiliency and direction of taskforce. Discussion on flood plane mapping project. Suggestion of purchasing generators, charging stations, heaters so we can help people in need during storm events. Identify buildings and places most suitable for shelters. Sharable relief equipment. Reach out to state and local emergency responders to see what kind of equipment/help we can provide.

Mattie: Should also focus on lifestyle changes and preventing additional impacts.

David: Can focus on both. This may be best done by working groups that target specific issues. Some things may be best made as resolution or proposal at convention. Not a lot of time to submit a resolution.

Chris: It is likely that we need further exploration before that is possible. Would love to see a group focus on direct action. Join with other groups to do beach clean-ups, litter, invasive plant removal, etc. May be a good idea for this group to have T-Shirts so people connect the EDRI with environmental action and advocacy; Group that focuses on reviewing and making recommendations on policy, group that focuses on liturgy and spiritual aspects. Suggested putting together a diocesan wide event to gather feedback and identify folks with experience and energy. Provide materials and opportunities to train creation stewards that can bring this back to individual parishes.

Ann: Identify specific groups and opportunities and ways to disseminate the information. Listserv, Diocesan newsletter.

Chris: need to put together in a single document what we have worked on in last three meetings and a call to action to bring people together. Event could happen after convention.

Group discussion: Propose advocating for dioceses offering lower rates from borrowers of Revolving Loan Fund for capital improvement projects that are energy efficient.
Development or identification of env. curriculum for Diocesan education programs.
Encouraging local and organic food for food drives.

III. ACTION STEPS:

Development of Call to Action and Vision

Discussion with experts on participation in a workshop.