

ST. THOMAS à BECKET CHURCH
Care for Our Common Home Ministry
November 17, 2020 7:00pm

OPENING PRAYER: “Praise be to you, my Lord” – these opening words of Laudato Sí begin the Cantic of St. Francis, our prayer today.

PRESENT: Ali Althen – our Zoom hostess, Lori Brady-Newman, Carol Even, Barbara Ewalt, Harriet Hanlon, Patti Kaiser, Bebee Stroik, Betty Sullivan

EDUCATION: Harriet was asked to present a summary of her work with the Al Gore Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training Program. FACS received a \$10,000 grant for providing ten volunteers to take the training. Harriet described her work as a volunteer, and it was much more than she expected. Gore did two- hour lectures and there were slide presentations – about mitigation of greenhouse gasses, about the science and damage around the world from unchecked emissions. Also, he described what people around the world are doing to survive as their homes are being destroyed by rising waters and wildfires. She was given writing homework and asked to propose three projects, one or more of which might involve our group in implementation. A project to obtain Audubon certification for a section of our parish property would be one way to involve the CCH.

Since her training is complete, Harriet has found herself tapped to help in other unique venues, from George Washington University’s Law School to the watershed and clusters of Reston.

Once she has reviewed the webinars, she will share the slides and webinars with our CCH ministry.

How will the new administration in Washington approach the environment? Ali shared her thoughts on local, state, and national policies and possibilities.

Ali did some study about the new federal administration coming in and how it will affect Fairfax County’s policies in the future term. President-elect Biden has made big statements about forward motion and environmental prerogatives that will depend on the outcome of the Senate races in Georgia, and, ultimately, control of the Senate. At the federal level, new leadership may offer help to the Virginia legislature to pursue state-wide goals. Fairfax County is limited to doing only what is allowed by the State because of the Dillon Rule*. Biden’s choices for labor, military and across the board are environmentally aware. Because of his apparent holistic view of the climate and environment issues, we can hope some influence may trickle down through the State to Fairfax.

Presently, Fairfax has taken major steps regarding health – by promoting ‘Health in All Policies’, the integration of health objectives into county plans, policies, and building projects. The County also addresses racial and social equity by its ‘One Fairfax’ policy. We can hope that climate will also become a priority to our Board of Supervisors. There are nine Democrats and one Republican on the Board. We should watch the Board to see any developments in this direction.

Next June Fairfax’s mini-climate plan, the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), will move into the implementation phase in 6-12 months with the focus on lowering greenhouse gas emissions. To the mitigation measures now in place, climate adaptation planning will be added.

Biden seeks international cooperation on environmental issues. Fairfax has always been in agreement with the Paris climate accord and is a signatory of the ‘We are Still In’ pledge. It will be exciting to see what Biden can accomplish from the Executive Branch alone and how much he seeks collaboration of House and Senate, and if legislation re climate change will move easily.

GREEN TIPS IN THE BULLETIN: Elaine has not been available lately, but the bulletin still looks good online. Although the Season of Creation has ended, we would like to insert monthly environmental tips regarding seasons of celebration such as tips on disposal of Christmas trees, uses for wrapping paper, etc. Any thoughts about this, please send to Betty Sullivan at sullivanb43@gmail.com.

NEXT MONTH: On December 15th, Lori has arranged for David and Gloria Mog to come and talk about the work they are doing, especially about Elders Climate Action, a group that started in Sweden. Carol and Lori are personally acquainted with the Mogs.

Action: homework – go to eldersclimateaction.org to see what the group does and to gain some activity for climate protests. We have a wonderful hill on Weihle Ave. and could make our own climate signs with empty shoes to protest or demonstrate concern.

NEWS TO USE: On the Saint John Neumann (SJN) website, sjn.org, search for 'Annual Fair-Trade Sale'. See fairtradewinds.net for shopping fair-trade products. There is a special code for SJN to give them 10%, and for free delivery to SJN, good until November 30. This Christmas sale goes until December 30th. It is one way to do good with Christmas shopping.

Last month Carol and Patti attended an SJN online meeting. Members were encouraged to report on media that are particularly related to ecology/theology. This practice would be a good addition to our meetings. We can add a segment to our meetings where we share books, magazine articles, and online materials that inspire us.

FACS newsletters are forwarded to all members. Their work is important in many ways. Please consider donating to FACS for Giving Tuesday, December 1st.

Last year in December we had our 'First Annual Holiday Potluck Brunch in the church hall with our Pastor and Church staff. COVID has broken our short string of annual brunches, but we are looking forward to next year's Christmas party.

NEXT Zoom MEETING: December 15, 2020

CLOSING POEM: Robert Francis "Nothing is Far" – November 2nd poem of the day
From poetryfoundation.org

* Virginia follows the Dillon Rule of strict construction concerning the legislative powers of local governing bodies. The Dillon Rule provides that local governing bodies have only those powers that are expressly granted, those that are necessarily or fairly implied from expressly granted powers and those that are essential and indispensable." – see 578125292684560794.weebly.com

Nothing Is Far

Though I have never caught the word
Of God from any calling bird,
I hear all that the ancients heard.

Though I have seen no deity
Enter or leave a twilit tree,
I see all that the seers see.

A common stone can still reveal
Something not stone, not seen, yet real.
What may a common stone conceal?

Nothing is far that once was near.
Nothing is hid that once was clear.

Nothing was God that is not here.

Here is the bird, the tree, the stone.
Here in the sun I sit alone
Between the known and the unknown.

Robert Francis, "Nothing Is Far" from *Collected Poems, 1936-1976*. Copyright © 1976 by Robert Francis. Reprinted by permission of The University of Massachusetts Press.