

ST. THOMAS à BECKET CHURCH  
Care for Our Common Home Ministry  
February 2, 2021 7:00pm virtual meeting Minutes

**OPENING PRAYER:** Carol read the Earth Prayer from Pope Francis

**PRESENT:** Ali Althen, Lori Brady-Neumann, Helen Dickey, Carol Even, Barbara Ewalt, Carla Gibson, Harriet Hanlon, Patti Kaiser, Mary Ricotta, Betty Sullivan

**LENTEN BULLETIN NOTES:**

Carol sent Betty a list of seven inspiring items for bulletin announcements, one for each week of Lent. They are gathered from various sources by a parishioner from Our Lady Queen of Peace who serves on the Diocesan team. Each item comes with a suggestion for fasting from various products or practices, such as meat, plastics, water waste, etc. There was concern about getting these into the Parish Bulletin with images and our logo. Carol feels confident that our work is valued by Fr. Bill, and given enough room, there ought to be no problem.

Regarding where to find the Bulletin, it is linked to the Parish website [stbchurch.com](http://stbchurch.com) and also found on Discover Mass website that publishes bulletins online for many other churches.

**COMMUNITY-WIDE ENERGY AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (CECAP) IN FAIRFAX COUNTY:**

Ali presented an update on CECAP today at the County Board of Supervisors' Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC) meeting. As Public Information Officer for the OEEC, she is doing a 9 week campaign of surveys and public education on climate action. It is an interesting initiative, releasing a lot of content, using videos, articles, digital and social media content, to inform and allow people to share opinions about the climate planning process. The surveys ask what people think about energy, transportation, development, and waste related to climate change. Ali will send additional private surveys to targeted businesses, especially non-profits that help underserved low-income communities. These surveys build on earlier surveys and aim to inform the County how best to engage people and organizations with climate planning.

CECAP will be presented to the Board in July, and then go into implementation. The Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP) is just barely getting started, and it addresses the climate problems as they impact the County, more from a top-down view. The plan will be developed with consultant services, county agencies, external groups, and community input, with the objective of the County instructing the community how to address resilience and adaptation. This will complement the greenhouse gas mitigation plan.

**THE PASTORAL COUNCIL:**

Ali attended an Executive Team pre-meeting of the mid-January Pastoral Council virtual meeting. She brought up the issue of solar panels as an agenda item and shared the Catholic Energies brochure with them. Since the Parish Council is addressing some immediate important issues they decided not to add a solar installation to their agenda at this time. They did not seem aware of Catholic Energies. It was a good conversation and now they are aware.

A pressing concern for the Council is how to keep people engaged and connected to the Parish. We don't livestream Mass and people are going to other parishes online. Ali walked the Council through all of the parish groups that want or ought to be hosting virtual activities. It would build up the community to have regular meetings. Ali suggested to the Council that each member adopt a group, to be a liaison, to lead to conversation of what kind of programming to offer, as a webinar or conversation online. The Council is looking at youth programs online, but parents are not eager for kids to have more reasons to use screens. Because the Council only meets every two months, there needs to be some other effort to encourage people to set feet in the door or to be more engaged. It will take an effort to get people to come back, and the office does not have a complete email list of parishioners to facilitate outreach.

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY:** Carol brought up the idea that we could do a regular clean-up on a nearby roadside and have a sign with our parish and group name on it. The program is run by VDOT and is called Adopt-A-Highway. We might be able to do the mile from the stoplight at Wiehle to the south crossing of North Shore.

Betty helps the Reston Chapter of AARP when they clean a portion of the W&OD trail once a month. It is quite a satisfying activity, with a beginning and an end but they are not doing it during pandemic. AARP provides bags and pick-up utensils.

Carol said that SJN had a road clean-up recently, and we could find out more from Janet Broderick there. Because Earth Day is coming up in April, we do not want to wait for the next Pastoral Council meeting. We might have a consensus in March and make it an Earth Day project.

Patti will speak with Janet Broderick and get the information about the VDOT program.

**FACS REPORT:** Patti reported on 2021 legislative issues selected for action by FACS, and thanked all who responded to the quick-alerts and wrote their legislators to support the Styrofoam ban. The 2021 priorities for FACS legislative actions are: (1) prohibiting the dispensing by food vendors of take-out, prepared food in single use polystyrene and Styrofoam food containers, (2) to automatically update Virginia's Uniform Statewide Building Code to meet international standards, (3) to support a rapid transition to clean and equitable transportation, (4) to establish a Green Bank in Fairfax County, and (5) replacement and conservation of trees during development.

Harriet went through the online advocacy training FACS provided. The training pointed out the issues that FACS advocacy will focus on in the next two years. Zero waste is an important goal to consider. Some towns in Italy have no waste. In San Francisco different waste materials are picked up every day, door to door. The key words Harriet came away with are – "Don't bury it, don't incinerate it, only reuse or repair it if you can. If it can't be reused or repaired, set up a commission to study the company that's making the product and make them change it!"

Carol gave the good news that FACS has been selected as a finalist for the American Climate Leadership Awards to be given out on March 15, 2021.

#### **CLIMATE NEWS:**

Presidential Climate Envoy John Kerry is expected to lead a climate change summit proposed by President Biden for Earth Day -April 22, 2021.

President Biden is asking that all government cars go electric.

Israelis have developed an electric car battery that charges fully in 5 minutes.

Gina McCarthy, the new EPA Director is going to reinstate tailgate emissions regulations.

Keystone XL pipeline is cancelled.

**LENTEN RESOLUTION:** Carol suggested that as a group we could give up palm oil for Lent. Because of the-sometimes illegal - destruction of habitat for wildlife that results from cultivating palm trees in areas that once were tropical forests, palm oil has gained a dubious distinction. More than 75% of animal species live in the tropical forests. About 75% of newly emerging diseases are known to be zoonotic or transferable from animals to humans and vice versa. As their habitat is being destroyed, animals are more likely to encounter human beings, and to transmit sickness. To fast from palm oil, we need to closely read food content labels. It is found in countless packaged products.

**CLOSING POEM:** Sabbaths 2003, Number 1 Wendell Berry

**NEXT MEETING:** March 2<sup>nd</sup> 7:00pm