

ST. THOMAS à BECKET CHURCH
Care for Our Common Home Ministry
November 3, 2021 Minutes

OPENING PRAYER: from the National Catholic Reporter

PRESENT: Lori Brady-Neuman, Helen Dickey, Carol Even, Barb Ewalt, Patti Kaiser, Bebee Stroik, Lauren Smith

EDUCATION: In the face of climate change, there is destruction of communities from flooding, drought, toxicity, and other outcomes of our modern life-styles. Barb pointed out a timely BBC report about southern Madagascar suffering drought that is leading to famine. This is one of numerous areas where people are in danger of losing their homes, lands and livelihoods due to climate change. Some ngo's are helping, but it is climate catastrophe for the people who suffer the losses. This should drive us to be all the more active in supporting care for creation.

Carol read from a Washington Post article about Prince Charles and his work for the climate. Once considered a crank for his unconventional beliefs about nature, today he is recognized as a spokesperson for the climate movement. In nature and in art imitating nature, "Charles sees a "sacred geometry" at work — in the pattern of flower petals, the movement of Venus across the night sky over time, and the stained-glass windows at the Chartres Cathedral." This reminds us to find inspiration in nature and art.

A short discussion followed about our relationship to God with comments ranging from the simple to the very practical: "God is BIG", and "Nothing is wasted in the economy of the Lord".

RECYCLING: Our recollections of recycling and the first Earth Day in the 1970's put light on the difficulty of recycling back then, as when you would have to drive down Route 7 to Tysons Corner with bins of materials to recycle. Barb reminds us that we've come a long way. We used to flatten tin cans to recycle, until they were rejected as being too heavy to transport. Plastic bottles and containers used to go straight into our recycle bins, until we learned that if these are not clean, they will simply become trash. Today, a chief problem of recycling is that the materials are dirty and cannot be used.

The County now takes food waste, but only if you take it to the I-66 or I-95 disposal centers. You can recycle food scraps at Mom's Market.

We still have so much plastic that is not recycled. Perhaps we could do a letter-writing campaign to ask producers to do better with their packaging and to set sustainability goals.

Regarding audio and video tapes, the local public libraries used to take good tapes, but not anymore. Patti has checked all around and learned that tapes are not recyclable. One way to ensure that the toxic chemicals in the magnetic tape are not processed into the air or water, is to remove the tape from its hard plastic shell. Dispose of the shell in the trash, and deliver the loose tapes to the electronic recycling section of the I-66 Transfer Station. From there it is sent to Securis, a local hazardous waste facility to be processed safely.

Carol read notes from the 350 Fairfax zoom meeting where Charlie Forbes spoke recently. Basically, he said that if the plastic has a recycle number on it, throw it in the bin – clean. It will get sorted. The most frequently recycled plastics are #'s 1 and 2, but #5 is sometimes accepted. Presently there is no market for the black or green plastic, but today you can put any plastic with a recycle number on it into the bin. Whether or not to leave lids on bottles – it doesn't matter. The one thing we need to avoid entirely is Styrofoam, and surprisingly some establishments still use it.

Bebee's granddaughter Monica has an art studio at the Workhouse, where another artist has asked people to save wine bottle caps and corks for her to use in art projects. There are many creative ways to cut down on waste. We can collect corks and give them to Bebee.

As of September 14, 2021, Fairfax County adopted the ordinance placing a 5 cent tax on plastic bags for-in-store, to-go, delivery and curbside pick-up purchases from grocery stores, convenience stores, and drug stores. It goes into effect on January 1, 2022.

Three years ago, Helene Shore brought the “Bag It” movie to our parish. Today she is asking anyone who sews to make bags that will be given to SNAP recipients. Contact her at 350fairfax@gmail.com for more information.

Carol likes to make her Cornerstones food donations in one of the many re-usable shopping bags that she has collected. Great idea!

RECIPE BOOK: Helen is collecting recipes for the cookbook and requested digital format preferable. One criterion for ingredients is the type of packaging, e.g. panko crumbs are sold in a cardboard container, thus are acceptable!

GARDEN: Although Carol hoped to do a fall garden weeding event in the Parish Garden, the colder, frosty, weather made the plan impractical. However, Carol has already removed a huge amount of weeds, bermudagrass and crabgrass, and will ask Betsy to try to get the gardener to refrain in the future from leaving weeds on the mulch where they quickly and gladly have taken root.

ENERGY BILLS: There are a few different plans that Dominion Energy provides to allow flexibility in power use and cost of energy.

- You can arrange to pay the same amount every month, and the cost stays the same, as long as your energy usage over the year and the cost to provide power does not change.

- You can sign up for lower cost energy in off-peak hours with their Peak Power plan. It encourages off-peak use by charging less per kWh.

- For low-income customers, there are special plans and programs to help use energy wisely.

Solar panels can significantly reduce energy bills, even reversing the cost to where Dominion pays you! In one large home with two electric vehicles and solar batteries, the cost of solar panels will be erased by savings within 10-20 years.

We might put this information in the Bulletin to point out something individuals can do.

ACTION: There is an important campaign to pass the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2021. The Act was introduced in the House in March of this year. To support passage of this act, contact your Congressperson <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/pollution-act/>. This will be a powerful Act if it is passed.

Because we have used zoom and found it helpful in reaching members who cannot attend in person, we will be asking how the Church might provide a professional level zoom subscription and a multi-directional microphone to use for meetings held in the building.

NEWS TO USE: A zero-waste store, Trace, opened recently in Vienna. Carol visited the store and met Mala Persaud, the proprietor who is interested in addressing our group. This store carries only sustainable items, including bamboo dining utensils, silk dental floss, silicone food covers, bar shampoo, and liquid and dry bulk items. Visit their website at: <https://tracezerowaste.com>.

Although there is a shortage of workers in the trash industry, Fairfax is hiring temporary workers during the fall clean-up season to help with picking up yard waste.

The County is not responsible for picking up road litter. That job likely belongs to VDOT alone.

NEXT MEETING: TBA It will be planned as a field trip to the Trace store in Vienna, where the owner will speak to our group.

Please note that there were no minutes taken at the October meeting, which was brief and only attended by three members.

CLOSING POEM: “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge” September 3, 1802. by William Wordsworth.