

ST. THOMAS à BECKET CHURCH
Care for Our Common Home Ministry
April 21, 2022 Minutes
9:45am – Room 5

OPENING PRAYER: Carol led us in prayer by reading Psalm 31, lately known as the Ukraine Psalm. Watch a reading of this Psalm on YouTube <https://www.archbishopetienne.com/prayers-for-peace-in-ukraine-psalm-31>

PRESENT: Lori Brady-Newman, Carol Even, Barbara Ewalt, Patti Kaiser

RECYCLING NEWS: Carol attended a recent 350 Fairfax zoom meeting, and heard Mike Ewall, founder of the Energy Justice Network, talk about the problem with incinerating trash at the Covanta facility. Covanta, in Lorton, burns 3000 tons of trash per day, and is the third largest incinerator in the United States. The emissions/exhaust produced by this burning create 75% of our local air pollution. The plant is 32 years old and has an expected life of 45 years. This means it could be spewing pollution into our air for another 12 years. Evidently it operates by a renewable contract – a most expensive way to pay for trash disposal. **It is important to defund Covanta because of the costs, the pollution and the injustice done to the environment and people in the near vicinity of the burning. Contact your supervisor in the County and request their support to quit renewing Covanta's contract.**

Some cities, like Austin, TX and San Francisco, CA charge for trash removal depending on the number of bags, and the drive is moving toward zero waste. Such a plan could work here and would be much more equitable for those who only put one bag of trash out every two weeks, for example, compared to those who fill their trash cans every week.

We talked about recycling and composting, and there was a question about the biodegradable plastic bags that MOM's provides. Evidently these will not degrade like kitchen waste, but commercial composters may process them. We talked about the future possibility of trash bags that biodegrade, and about things that don't decay. We would like to be able to buy bags for trash that are not plastic. All that plastic goes into the incinerator and creates pollution. Some trash companies, fortunately, are doing consumer education.

We need a way to pressure manufacturers to change from throw-away plastic packaging. For many years merchandise has been overprotected from theft by hard plastic, but this creates just one more plastic problem.

On the bright side, plastic bag recycling continues, and we know that bags from newspapers and produce can be transformed into TREX decks, tables, benches, etc. Additionally, although we know some produce bags, like those from MOM's are biodegradable, there is some movement toward using a biodegradable product to make the large garbage bags we all use. Also, the plastic bag tax in some local jurisdictions is now in effect.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE: Carol attended the Diocesan Care for Creation meeting and learned that Bishop Burbidge plans to sign up the Arlington Diocese for the seven-year Laudato Sí Action Platform. Each of us can enroll individually as well at <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>

Reports from other parishes described their recent activities including, bird walks, garden talks, a speaker on native plantings, joining up with a local nature challenge, creating podcasts and webinars and more!

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY: Adopt-A-Highway clean-up of Wiehle Avenue is scheduled for May 7th, starting at 9:45am, with possible rain date tba. The response for volunteers has been very positive.

NATIVE PLANT SAPLING GIVE AWAY: May 8th is the day for the sapling and garden books give-away after the 11:00am Mass. We will need to be by main door, and to have a display explaining our work. This could help to promote interest in what we do as a group, and in the Laudato Si pledge. It would help us to bring awareness to the Encyclical and the Church's efforts to combat climate change.

The saplings are of small native trees and shrubs – listed in last month's minutes, and include tentatively-identified mulberry saplings. We will place an announcement into the Bulletin about the event and taking care of Mother Earth by planting native trees.

Lori offered to help Carol with the distribution of the saplings. The plants will go from a large bucket to being handed over in wax paper lunch bags.

Helen will be asked to help locate 5 buckets.

Carol's neighbor has bird/garden books, including a series of 14 Time/Life books – to give away.

It would be wonderful if Fr. Bill would say something or allow an announcement at the 11:00am Mass on the 8th.

Happy Mother's Day to Mother Earth!

SCHEDULING NEXT MEETING(S): Carol will reach out to our mailing list to remind them that we miss them, and to ask whether they want to continue with the group. If so, they will be asked to choose their preferred time(s) to meet. The likely time to be offered would be 1:30pm on a weekday afternoon.

CLOSING POEM: Visitors by Joan Kane