

The Goals and Strategies of the Creation Care Committee of The Chapel of the Cross

O heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (Book of Common Prayer p.841)

Rationale

Every day, it seems, there are major reports in the news about the threat that climate change poses to the future of humans, to the overall environment, and even to the future of civilization and the world order. Nevertheless, even those who contend that we are facing the potential of a calamity of unparalleled proportions maintain that it is not too late, if we act now, to mitigate the impact of climate change and adapt to the anticipated changes that are in store for us.

The Most Reverend Michael Curry compels the Episcopal Church to take a stand and to take action to care for God's creation:

“When it comes to climate change, what affects one part of the planet affects the whole planet, and what affects one part of the human family affects the whole family. As members of the Anglican Communion, we share a commitment to face the imminent threats to our climate and to the biodiversity that sustains all life. These threats know no national or natural boundaries...”

“We today are presented with a simple choice: will we live as friends, as brothers and sisters, as Beloved Community, or will we be subsumed under the rising waters of chaos?... We human beings have been charged with being trustees, caretakers and stewards of God's creation (Genesis 1:26-31)...”

“We Episcopalians have seen the devastation of surging storms and the ravages of climate change in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Florida Keys, Puerto Rico, California, Houston and beyond. We have seen too many of the children of God suffer the interconnected pain of economic, racial and environmental injustice. We can and must do this. With the policies we advocate on Capitol Hill, with the solar panels on our church rooftops, with the wholesome food grown on our church grounds, with the prayers on our very lips.”

Clearly, Creation Care is a priority of The Episcopal Church. Creation Care is one of the primary ministries identified on The Episcopal Church website:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/creation-care>. The Episcopal Church, also, is a major partner in the Interfaith Power and Light organization: <https://ncipl.org/> and a carbon tracker has been developed by the Episcopal Diocese of California: <https://www.diocal.org/>

The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina has also made creation care one of the primary focal points in its mission and work and has charged congregations to do the same:

<https://episdionc.org/Ministries%20&%20Mission/environmental-ministry.html>

This past Lent, Bishop Curry encouraged all Episcopalians to take the Episcopal Creation Care Pledge (see video of his message at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/creation-care>).

Clearly, as a church and as individual parishioners, we are called by our leadership to take action. Citing language from The Pledge:

“As the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, we long to grow loving, liberating, life-giving relationships with the whole of God’s Creation. Together, we pledge to protect and renew the Earth and all who call it home. Together, we are living the Way of Love:

- *Loving: We will share our stories of love and concern for the Earth and link with others who care about protecting the sacred web of life.*
- *Liberating: We will stand with those most vulnerable to the harmful effects of environmental degradation and climate change – women, children, poor people and communities of color, refugees, migrants.*
- *Life-Giving: We will change our habits and choices in order to live more simply, humbly and gently on the Earth.”*

Of course, the Episcopal Church is not alone in its quest to protect God’s creation. Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical: [*Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*](#) makes a compelling case for the need for mankind to cease its ravaging of the earth and to become the protector of God’s creation:

I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: “Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation”. 22 All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.

Goals

Drawing from the many resources that have been reviewed in the development of this initiative, especially the framing of the Episcopal Church’s commitment to the Creation Care Ministry by The Most Reverend Michael Curry, and our Bishops The Rt. Revs. Sam Rodman and Ann Hodges-Copple the following four goals for the Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross have been identified:

1. **The COTC will continue to reduce its carbon footprint and waste:** The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will work with other parish ministries (e.g. Buildings and Grounds, Christian Formation, Parish Life) to suggest programs and strategies that model good stewardship of the resources that God has given us and that will help us to reduce our carbon footprint and generation of waste.
2. **Parishioners will be encouraged and supported to live a sustainable lifestyle:** The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will educate, motivate, and provide support to our parishioners in living a sustainable lifestyle and reducing our carbon footprint.

3. **Those impacted by environmental degradation will be supported:** The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will work with other ministries (especially the Global Mission and Outreach Committees) to inform parishioners and the public about the relationship between environmental degradation and climate change and the impact on the most vulnerable populations locally and globally, and will look for ways to support programs that help those impacted by climate change to adapt.
4. **Parishioners will be supported in witnessing in the community and to policy and decision makers:** The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will offer support to those parishioners who feel called to live out their baptismal covenant by bearing witness in the local, state, and national community (including religious affiliations) to the detrimental impact of climate change and who wish to advocate for policies, programs, laws, and regulations that serve to protect the environment for current and future generations and all of God's creation.

Strategies

Goal 1: The COTC will continue to reduce its carbon footprint and waste: The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will work with other parish ministries (e.g. Buildings and Grounds, Christian Formation, Parish Life) to suggest programs and strategies that model good stewardship of the resources that God has given us and that will help us to reduce our carbon footprint and generation of waste.

- Develop a three-year plan for helping the church reduce its carbon footprint and waste.
- Engage in conversation with the Faith in Action commission to develop budget request that accounts for Creation Care initiatives.
- Apply for Creation Care grants from the Episcopal Church (contact Melanie Mullen)

Goal 2: Parishioners will be encouraged and supported to live a sustainable lifestyle: The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will educate, motivate, and provide support to its parishioners in living a sustainable lifestyle and reducing their carbon footprint.

- Will encourage all parishioners to take The Episcopal Creation Care Pledge and to evaluate their family's carbon footprint using the carbon tracker made available at <https://www.diocal.org/>.
- Work with parish clergy and staff to develop and execute a communications plan to educate, motivate, and support parishioners on issues related to Creation Care and to clearly state The Chapel of the Cross' commitment to these goals. Resources that should be considered include sermons, bulletin announcements, the COTC website, social media, forums and guest speakers, documentaries and movies, testimonials, and creating powerful moments. [EcoAmerica's website](#) has many useful publications pertaining to education and communication, including "[15 Steps to Create Effective Climate Communications](#)."
- Continue to incorporate themes related to Creation Care and our goals into the liturgy, sermons, hymns, and church publications.
- Encourage parishioners to sign up to receive newsletters and other media to keep them informed about climate change.

Goal 3: Those impacted by environmental degradation will be supported: The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will work with other ministries (especially the Global Mission and Outreach Committees) to inform parishioners and the public about the relationship between environmental degradation and climate change and the impact on the most vulnerable populations locally and globally, and will look for ways to support programs that help those impacted by climate change to adapt.

- Ask the Faith in Action Commission to encourage the Global Mission and Outreach Committees in particular, and all the church's committees in general, to consider climate change and its impacts in the programs that they implement and the use of their resources.
- Suggest ways to incorporate themes related to Creation Care in the programs of youth ministry, campus ministry, and children and adult formation.

Goal 4: Parishioners will be supported in witnessing in the community and to policy and decision makers: The Creation Care Committee of the Chapel of the Cross will offer support to those parishioners who feel called to live out their baptismal covenant by bearing witness in the local, state, and national community (including religious affiliations) to the detrimental impact of climate change and who wish to advocate for policies, programs, laws, and regulations that serve to protect the environment for current and future generations and all of God's creation.

- Make known the work COTC is doing around Creation Care and when appropriate communicate goals, plans for implementation and progress reports to the parish.
- Will encourage the Chapel of the Cross to participate in a leadership role on this issue with other churches in the community and within the Episcopal Diocese.
- Recruit, identify, and keep informed parishioners who are concerned about climate change, who want to continue to educate themselves on issues related to the environment and who are interested in advocating for the care of God's creation with leaders within the Episcopal church, in local, state, and national government, and in the business community.
- Support those who wish to participate in public forums and demonstrations that advocate for the protection of God's creation and consider other ways in which the COTC can keep this issue in the public's eye.

Organizing for Action

The ad hoc planning team, working in conjunction with the Creation Care Committee, will finalize this document and present it to the Clergy and ask that it be shared with the Vestry so that parish leadership will be aware of the committee's strategies and goals and, hopefully, support them as they are able.

The Creation Care Committee will take the lead in implementing strategies to achieve the stated goals. In order to do this, the Creation Care Committee will need to expand its membership and create subcommittees around the goals and major strategies. Hopefully, this can happen by tapping into the time and talents of those who were energized by the visit last March of the Reverend Jim Antal, including those who read his book, [Climate Church, Climate World](#).

The Creation Care Committee recommends that one or two "kickoff" strategies, planned and coordinated with staff and/or clergy, be identified and implemented this fall to bring visibility to and develop support for this initiative.

Approved by Chapel of the Cross Vestry on June 20, 2019