

Sept 10th, 2019 Creation Care Task Force Meeting Notes

Notes taken by Phoebe Chatfield

Agenda

Task Force on the Care of Creation and Environmental Racism

September 10, 2019

Teleconference

1. Opening prayer (David)
2. Welcome, meeting overview, minutes from March and May meetings (David)
3. Check-in/prayer request members (10 minutes)
 - Wildfires in Northern California
 - BP withdrawing from oil drilling in Alaska, concern that smaller companies will commit further pollution and other malpractice
 - Bishop Rice announced a diocese-wide solar project with 95-100% participation!
4. Introduction of Phoebe Chatfield (Melanie Mullen)
 - New Associate for Creation Care and Justice
 - Contact Phoebe: pchatfield@dfms.org, 781-718-0161
5. Update on grant and networking program (10 minutes) Brian
 - Sarah Nelson and Perry Jones have been taking point on this
 - Question for the group: If you are on a committee, and your committee has not yet chosen someone to be on the grant reading committee, **please choose that person ASAP!**
 - Need one person from each subcommittee so we have as many perspectives as possible
 - Just missing the Theology Working Group - can you appoint someone to the grant reading committee?
 - **How can we best utilize the November Meeting to move forward the grant process? Could it be a chance to read and review grants together?**
 - Six Weeks seems like an appropriate time for people to prepare grant applications (input from Melanie)
 - Perry has a timeline for receiving and reading applications.
 - Ideally, we will distribute the applications by theme or subgroup - so that readers can compare similar applications.
 - Perry will screen as they come in and be the first set of eyes on those applications
 - So if there are issues, missing pieces, etc applicants have the opportunity to remedy that.

- Good to know that most people submit at the very last minute!
 - ****Most likely we won't be ready to read application by the November meeting but we should have a clearer timeline by then.**
- Something to prioritize - clear communication with applicants including **clear requirements for grant recipients (for communication, etc)**
- Grant Press Release coming out next week - could this be an opportunity to emphasize the Creation Care website?
 - **We need complete and updated information on the website about Task Force Members**
 - **Stephanie will add a paragraph about current Task Force activities**
 - Delia: could we also include Climate Tracker, Toolkit, UN Reports, Yale Climate Connections
 - And Ministry Partners - Church Pension Fund, ERD, EMM, Kanuga, Sewanee, UTO could be put in that

6. Updates on eco-justice ministry and report (10 minutes) Delia

- Written reports have been uploaded to Basecamp.
- We have 11 video reports in progress! Some have been filmed, some are partially filmed, and some still need to be filmed.
 - Some are connected to the Task Force - **Bishop Rice, Bishop Fitzpatrick we can discuss if there are opportunities to make videos from your work.**
 - Some bring new connections
- Phoebe will help with the timeline for editing these videos with the editing team in New York.
- Delia had a conversation with Chris Sikkema about the Episcopal Asset Map
 - We can use this for several parts of the Task Force work
 - Environmental Racism films as a perfect example!
 - Grant recipient reporting more broadly - grantees submit their reports which get uploaded to that asset map.
 - Opening up opportunities for collaboration and direct connections! People can search within the map by location or type of work
 - Phoebe could be a "turnstile" person - curating what can get added to the Asset Map
 - While the people doing the work are responsible for keeping the information up to date!
 - This means that we're building capacity without having to do all of the work of making connections.
- Glossary - we need to go live with the glossary when the grant goes up. **Please look at the existing definitions and add thoughts and comments!**
 - This will remain a live document, so additions can be made going forwards.
 - The glossary will live on the Creation Care website, probably right off the landing page.
 - AND how will we communicate to the broader public that this has been added!

7. Update on theology working group (10 minutes) Andy

- Sarah and Andy are co-editing the Theology Review
- Academic section: Richard Acosta and another scholar confirmed - looking to add two more scholars, and definitely at least one female contributor
 - Andy has one lead on that
 - **Open to suggestions! Please send those along**
- Practical section: Grace Aheron, Margaret Bullitt-Jonas. And one more confirmed
 - Looking for 1-2 additional contributors
 - Brian Sellers-Petersen and Lewis Powell are reaching out to Rachel to ask her to contribute a shorter piece, 3,000-4,000 words
 - Rachel said yes!
- **We need book reviews! Deadline January 15th for content.** This should not feel daunting - all of you have read books and can write about the impact that those have had on you.
 - Many readers are less interested in academic theology, more interested in accessible books to be reading.
 - Several task force members have written books! Stephanie, Brian, etc - any of those would be great to include.
 - Andy will work with us to choose texts, give guidance.
- This is an important chance to shift the church's conversation about creation care and environmental racism, intersecting issues of class and gender and international justice. The book review is one great way to do that.
 - People are hungry for these conversations
- Question: have we thought about including poetry?
 - Yes, though unfortunately the poetry editor has just stepped down. Would anyone be interested in helping with that process?
 - Stephanie has poetry ideas/contacts
- Authors: Are we restricted to the Episcopal Church? No!
 - Perry has a contact related to food, faith, farming who could be contacted.
- Could we get the Presiding Bishop or Canon Spellman to write an introduction?
 - Yes! A great idea!
 - We'd just need to give them guidance around theme and language.
 - Andy will coordinate with Melanie.

8) Requests for funding for GC currently unfunded Mandates(10 minutes)

a) Climate tracker - C008 - request for \$30K in resolution

- Question raised - on page 5 of the materials sent, there's a reference to the Anglican communion's recommendation of the WWF Carbon Footprint Tracker
 - So does a carbon footprint tracker already exist? What does the carbon tracker we're supporting ADD to what already exists?
 - DioCal tracker adds the church-specific component vs. being purely individual.

- Platform for collaboration and accountability (like a mini social network platform)
- **We already approved the Carbon Tracker, they're waiting to receive Executive Council Approval.

b) COP talks - A018- request from Bishop Andrus \$30K

- We've approved as well, though only \$3K
- Mark Richardson - request that the group meet before COP to do pre-planning around the goals they want to accomplish while at COP - to set participants up for success.

c) Carbon offsets A014- request \$25K in resolution

d) Study of church owned property D053 - inventory of church owned properties

- Andy posted both of these proposals
 - His students have been working on these. Executive Summary and resolutions at the end make clear 3 options:
 - 1) Outsourcing the carbon offsetting - cheapest and easiest but raises ethical problems. Strong reasons to do it in-house include control and opportunities to be more accountable to transformation. (vs. "buying indulgences" connotations of this proposal).
 - 2) Set up domestic program by inventorying church lands and proposing best practices including carbon forestry (planting and conserving forests, sustainable agriculture, etc) and tracking carbon equivalent offset by those. \$39,000 for this, connected to D053.
 - 3) Partnering with Episcopal Relief and Development. They are doing their own offsetting, we'd be looking at doing 10 times the offsets that ERD does. They'd be requesting \$35,000 to increase that capacity to meet the full need for the resolution.
 - Nathan questions - A014 - likes bringing it in house, likes that idea. BUT concerned that doesn't make sense to use church-owned lands to offset 815 staff activities carbon emissions? (Internal politics of that and the way that looks more broadly).
 - Andy - no, D053 is a way to give churches resources on how to do sustainable practices on their lands. We're suggesting that the task force fund starting these projects but that the ongoing funds for offsets come instead from existing budgets (ideally transportation) on the scale of about \$35,000 annually.
 - So additional funds are thus put into creation care projects, a positive step.
 - Nathan: Felt like 18 of the 19 resolutions were new steps to take, positive on the environment, but then the offset piece is different.
 - Should we treat the church lands as a positive step for stewarding creation AND also offset our activities?
 - This is all meant to be a pilot to provide an example and be used on a larger scale (by diocese, etc) in time for the next General Convention.

- Could see this as a polity issue OR could positively imagine it as a partnership and a collaboration, national folks showing concern for local ecosystems, and a way to engage people across the country in this work.
- Mark Richardson - speaks in favor of using ERD, agrees that its better to be a stakeholder than to give away the problem, but ERD is perfect because we also don't want to reinvent the wheel if ERD has an existing program.
- Perry: A014 - \$35,000 for the purpose of providing funds for a partnership with AOD for a partnership and a domestic offset program.
 - Are these onetime initial funds? To then be funded by annual travel budget funds?
 - YES - \$\$ for scaling up their work in Burundi, community capacity to continue to do this (not just infrastructure). One challenge is land tenure there, so we would ALSO pursue domestic offsets.
- Perry: D053 - a partnership with the task force referenced in the proposal. Who would be our liaison to that project? Which subcommittee?
 - A question for the task force to discuss.
- Important to note - Brian would be hired to do some of this work. It is a question: **how should we navigate a member of the task force being paid in one of these projects?** (Issue of transparency and code of standards going forwards for the task force).
 - Stephanie - we need additional conversations on this.
- Delia - we need to be really careful about the theology around carbon offsets. Lots of literature about the problems - many groups have gone away from them because it puts the responsibility on individuals and developing countries and does not necessarily support accountability and transformation. People should not feel that they don't need to change their behavior based on the existence of carbon offsets.
 - And there's a question around capacity-building. A challenge in the Episcopal Church around capacity - how do we make sure we are building capacity that will continue after the end of this program or cycle?
 - If we go with ERD, what needs to happen such that once this \$35,000 goes away, the program will still continue (concern with D053 around whether it can continue after the demonstration process). Delia teaches GIS and has concerns around where they put the \$\$ and how this has been proposed - Delia's students could make these maps in a couple weeks - then what do we DO with those maps
 - Money spent just for the maps, plans exist around storytelling, but then what??
- Andy - both proposals are pilot projects to be brought to General Convention. If it would continue, it would take a dedicated staff person going forwards (even outside ERD) which would need to be funded. Continuity possible but would need to be funded.
- Decision: this requires more conversation and more work - **convening a small working group to consider this! Perry would like to be on the working group. Stephanie convening it with whoever else - let her know.**
- Coming back to Brian's involvement - need to circle up with GCO.
- Sarah has a process question - how were these proposals created and selected?

e) Promoting Energy and Water efficiency A213- request for \$30K in resolution

- No proposal pending currently, no request for funding that Stephanie could find.

f) Helping communities Affected by change in energy use D081- "devote financial resources to community development and organizing"

- Came from a conversation with OGR and Andy but without a specific funding request
- Might be appropriate for grant application?

9) Presiding Bishop's Creation Care Consultation updates (Melanie, Mark, Rob)

- Detailed notes from the consultation: https://dfms-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/mmullen_dfms_org/EUuOifw3_WVOvxe426ClgkYB7JHtDeOt9guhCfNKsguiNw?e=KAr6C6
- Ad hoc working groups came out of that to address some of the resolutions from the last General Convention - especially the vague ones around carbon neutrality, green energy. Stephanie is on a working group around a revolving investment fund
- Big goal = Episcopal Church 100% renewable energy by 2024. Had one meeting with the Catholic Climate Covenant to compare notes and start working on this.
- The Presiding Bishop wants to engage more people outside of this task force and bring them into this important work.
- Climate strike on the 20th. <https://globalclimatestrike.net/>
 - GreenFaith is Melanie's touchpoint for engaging in the climate strike. **SIGN UP HERE as a person of faith in favor of the strikes.** <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/sign-on-letter-people-of-faith-for-the-climate-strikes/>
 - GreenFaith and Fletcher Harper are convening a working group around that.
- Climate conference on the 24th:
 - In New York in conjunction with the UN Climate Summit
 - No ecumenical service (that was cancelled)
 - ELCA and DFMS co-hosting, with a goal of a faith-based ecumenical statement on the Emergency of the Climate Crisis
 - 40+ denominations determined to come together
 - Press conference encouraging people of the world to do something
 - Reflecting on the UN and COP
- Blessed Tomorrow Survey with EcoAmerica!
 - Last year we bested every denomination with 1,000 respondents and surveyed with deep support for climate action.
 - We're doing it again this year! Survey Live Sept. 16th
 - Press release coming out soon! Please help us spread the word about this important effort.

10) In person November 2019 meeting

- The committee will extend a formal invitation to Phoebe to come to the November meet up.
Stephanie is taking point on that.

11) Invitation: March gathering in North Carolina at Kanuga, a recreation of the Lansing Lee conference (with a Creation Care focus and perhaps with a new name). Partners include EPPN, EMM, ERD, ORG, and several others, possibly including the church pension group.

- This is a very East coast location, so thought has gone in to live-streaming the event and engaging with people virtually
- Michelle Roberts is going to be one of the speakers
- March 13th - 14th
- Kanuga is in Western North Carolina
- A conference invitation will go out soon!

12) Delia attended a meeting recently on Shareholder Engagement within the Church Pension Fund

- Excellent speaker on Climate Change and Environmental Justice speaking on shareholder engagement
- Shareholder Engagement should be treated as an opportunity for Evangelism as well as Creation Care
 - How can we use their materials and these meetings to think about evangelism with younger people - younger people care deeply about social justice and environmental issues.
 - How could we engage younger people's perspective and energy on this effort?
 - Young people have a demand-driven influence on companies
 - The church has shareholder influence - combining these two could have a big impact!
- **Great issue/idea to explore in November**
- Great reminder that the church voted to Divest and Reinvest! But we aren't seeing actual progress on that. Stephanie has met on these in the future. We need to walk the line between these two?
 - Perry did research on shareholder engagement and divestment while a theology student! **She will share that on Basecamp with the group.**