



# FCGG Newsletter

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Summer 2024

## Taking Root by Susan Fox



Trees in the Cincinnati region are under threat from many causes including development, non-native organisms (plants, insects, and diseases), climate change, unnatural growing conditions, and apathy or lack of understanding of the importance of trees.

As people of faith, we are called to tend and nurture God's creation. Trees help us care for people and the rest of the natural world.

In 2015, Taking Root (TR) was founded to counter the catastrophic loss of ash trees, which had formed a significant portion of both our wild and developed tree canopy. Our mission has grown since then to inspire

and empower all to conserve and improve our region's threatened tree canopy.

Education about how to protect and nurture existing trees is very important because mature trees are much more valuable to the environment than recently planted trees. We have a free Great Tree Summit in February – a morning of great tree information – rotating between the 8 counties in three states that we serve. In December, the Tree Professionals Seminar, a daylong event with experts both local and from around the country.

'Trees for Me' is one of our signature programs. Funded by grants and donations,

we are able to give away trees approximately 6' -8' tall, primarily to underserved communities, those with the highest heat index and most impervious surfaces. Homeowners sign up to receive a tree, predominantly native trees.

Another program is our Mini-grants where public groups such as schools, libraries, community gardens, houses of worship, etc. receive money to plant trees of a size that works for them.

In 2023, TR was involved with approximately 470 trees being planted. This will result in, over 20 years, approximately:

- 495,500 lbs. carbon dioxide sequestered



## Bumblebees by Deb Vance



Who doesn't love bumblebees? They're cute, furry and don't sting. They climb onto or into flowers -- like passion-flower and blue gentian-- and fall asleep. Children like to pet them.

And they're dying in the USA. Why? Especially because of pesticide use --

neonicotinoids which are systemic. And herbicides affect host plants (flowers), nesting sites, and habitat. Generalist pollinators, bumblebees can fly 1/2 mile from their nests. Seems like bumblebees just can't win -- even livestock grazing disrupts their colonies.

Bumblebee population has dropped 90% in 20 years. In the Midwest and Southeast, half the bumblebee population has disappeared. 99% in NY state are gone. In eight states, the bee has vanished. In Ohio other native bees species are disappearing too.

## Bumblebees cont'd

Ohio native "rusty patched" bumblebee was officially added to the endangered species list seven years ago. The worst slaughter -- 45K-100K bumblebee casualties -- occurred near an Oregon shopping mall when hundreds of colonies perished from contact with trees treated with neonicotinoids.

Although global warming, disease and habitat loss are factors, pesticides are the biggest factor. Studies show that states with the highest increase in pesticide use showed had the most dramatic effects, primarily in urban and suburban landscapes. Homeowners are rarely educated about how to

use the chemicals. Sometimes containers don't list the dangers, other times homeowners don't follow the directions. If you must poison, choose the least toxic option -- avoid dusts and microencapsulated products.

Spraying insecticide in early morning is especially harmful. The worst of the chemical killing fields happen in spring, when queens are founding colonies. Poisons disrupt the bees' reproductive success; effects may not be immediate. Bees journey far from home may bring poisoned pollen back to the colony.

If your home or place of worship has a

lawn and you feel that you must mow, leave one or more areas as large as possible un-mowed for the whole year. Mow at highest cutting height possible 12-16" is best. In Cincinnati, Christ the King Lutheran Church transformed part of their lawn into a pollinator oasis and celebrate with an annual monarch festival.



## Let Your Voice Be Heard

by Ariel Miller

**Citizens Not Politicians** petition drive in home stretch: Scores of faith-based volunteers in Greater Cincinnati have turned in their final batch of petitions as part of the statewide campaign to amend our constitution to prohibit elected officials and lobbyists from serving on the commission that draws Ohio's electoral maps. The proposed amendment also sets criteria for fair districts and requires transparency and public input in map making. Gerrymandering enables corruption and policies counter to the majority views of Ohioans on matters such as education, race and climate change. Citizens Not Politicians is endorsed by the Ohio Council of Churches, Ohio Environmental Council, the League of

Women Voters, and many other civic groups. If the petitions generate the required number of valid signatures, and voters adopt it in November, the new process will be used to redraw Ohio's state and Congressional districts in 2025 to be used in the 2026 election. Please contact the campaign to schedule a speaker for your congregation.

**Two energy justice bills** alive in Ohio House: June could be a decisive month for two bi-partisan energy justice bills: HB 79 to restore utilities' energy efficiency programs and HB 197, which would create a four-year community solar pilot program in

Ohio. By the third week in May, neither had made it to a vote on the floor of the Ohio House, but that's still possible before the House goes on summer recess. Your call could help persuade representatives who are opposed or on the fence. Go to <https://ohiohouse.gov/members/district-map> to find out who represents you in the Ohio House. You will find the phone number by clicking on your Rep's photo.

Passing them by a strong margin in the House will improve their chances in the Senate. These bills must pass before the end of December or the process has to start all over again. You can follow these bills via [Faith Communities Go Green's Facebook page](#).

## Taking Root cont'd

- 1,130 lbs. gaseous pollutants removed;
- 2,107,800 gallons of water intercepted (reduced storm-water runoff).

We work with other organizations including: Make a Difference Day, Green Umbrella, Cincinnati Public Schools, etc., all to promote environmental justice through trees and a more biodiverse region for all.

Come join us at:  
[info@takingroot.info](mailto:info@takingroot.info)



## FCGG Included in Grant Applications!

by Joanne Gerson

The City of Cincinnati is applying for a grant opportunity for nonprofits, including houses of worship (HOW) that serve disadvantaged communities and invited FCGG to be a part of their grant application. They selected 8 HOW participating in our Energy Efficiency Initiative that met the grant criteria. If awarded, this grant will provide funding for energy assessments, insulation, HVAC systems, and lighting, and more, to improve the energy efficiency in buildings. This presents a significant opportunity for faith communities to receive funding to help with energy efficiency upgrades in their facilities and create jobs for minority business in the process.

This is not the first and will likely not be the last grant opportunity to come our way. Recently both OKI and EquaSion submitted grant applications that include funding for HOWs through FCGG. Another interesting proposal we are looking at may lower the cost of electricity, solar installations, or energy efficiency upgrades through purchase agreements in collaboration with a group of HOWs to take advantage of economies of scale.

We need to be prepared when the opportunity presents because the amount of time we are given to respond is generally very short. Here are two things you can do right now. Go the 'Take Action' tab on our website at [FCGG.org](https://www.fcgg.org) to find the section

for the Energy Efficiency Initiative. If you, or a member of your congregation, never completed the EEI Survey, please complete it. If your congregation already completed the Survey, please send us 13 consecutive months of utility bills for your facility. The instructions for getting your utility bills are in the EEI section on the FCGG.org website. Send them to Ken and for questions also, please write to Ken at [facilities@fcgg.org](mailto:facilities@fcgg.org) and Joanne at [info@fcgg.org](mailto:info@fcgg.org). We do not share your information with the public without your permission. Together, we can help you save money to use for your important community work and reduced pollution to better care for our common home.

## Lexington Diocese Commits to Net Zero by 2030

by Ted Bergh

The Diocese of Lexington, has pledged to reach net-zero emissions across its 59 parishes as well as schools and other institutions in the next six years. Net-zero emissions is the elimination of carbon pollution by an organization through using less carbon sourced energy and counterbalancing hard-to-eliminate emissions through carbon removal from the atmosphere. Carbon pollution's main cause is burning fossil fuels that trap heat in the atmosphere.

The "Net-zero commitment by the Lexington Diocese is the boldest responses to climate change from the U.S. Catholic Church — and it comes from a region home to one of the largest coal deposits in the country.

The diocese of 41,000 Catholics spans 50 counties in eastern and central Kentucky. 40 of the 50 counties are in Appalachia, and the livelihoods of many people rely on coal mining. It is

one of the poorest parts of the U.S., where coal mining has been a significant although declining industry. Coal mining provided income for generations of families although often at some cost due to safety and health concerns.

Bishop of Lexington, John Stowe, a Conventional Franciscan, took inspiration from Pope Francis writing in the recent release of *Laudatum Deum* where the pope said, "I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point. In addition to this possibility, it is indubitable that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons."

Francis wrote later that "the necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar ener-

gy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed."

Bishop Stowe said regarding the Lexington commitment, "It's one thing to talk about doing something. It's another thing to put something out there that you can be held accountable to and have measured for you," Stowe said. "So we're grateful to have this opportunity."

Source: National Catholic Reporter - May 2024.





To learn more and join Faith Communities Go Green, a Green Umbrella and EquaSion collaboration, go to : [www.fcgg.org](http://www.fcgg.org)

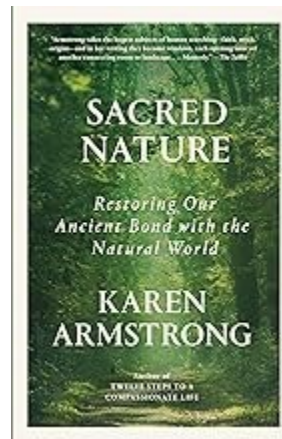
### Join a Working Group!

Advocacy: Contact Ariel at [Advocacy@fcgg.org](mailto:Advocacy@fcgg.org)

Facilities: Contact Ken at [Facilities@fcgg.org](mailto:Facilities@fcgg.org)

Education/Lifestyles:

Contact Becca at: [Education@fcgg.org](mailto:Education@fcgg.org)



The following is adapted from Karen Armstrong's book entitled *Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World*:

In order to redeem the natural world, we too should learn to align ourselves with it emotionally and realize our affinity with and utter dependence upon it. We must make a deliberate effort to look beneath the surface of nature and experience sacrality for ourselves, as Kabbalists, Muslims, Christians, Confucians, Daoists, Hin-

dus and so many other traditions have for centuries, They managed this not by scientific study, but through creativity and art-with rituals, poetry, music and bodily gestures that have a profound effect on mental life. We too must learn to see nature more intimately, and this requires imagination.

We must recognize the gravity of our environmental predicament and our personal responsibility for it, but also be intent on a transformation of mind and heart that will impel us to repair the damage. We know that nature throughout the ages was revered by the great sages, mystics and prophets of all traditions. It is now up to us to revive that knowledge and commitment to recover our bond with the natural world.

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## Fifth Christian Church Energy Assessment and Energy Assessor Training by Donna Turner

I enjoyed our energy assessor training and the energy assessment. Fifth Christian had our energy assessment Thursday, February 15, 2024. As people streamed in that evening, I encouraged them to have snacks as we set up. We ran into a rash of technical issues; Ken was supposed to come but couldn't attend in person and would present his part on Zoom. Then Justin had to come in from Columbus and was a tad late. We had 18 people. A few church members joined out of curiosity, so almost everyone was new but our technical issues brought us together. Everyone was focused and sharing ideas and when we prevailed and the training was completed, we then broke into groups to do the energy assessment. It was interesting to see my church

through the eyes of the guests and to answer questions about the mundane energy users, overhead lights, stove in the kitchen, thermostat.



I recommend that all churches participate in the energy assessment program.

The 13 consecutive months of energy bills are easily downloaded from the energy company website. They are needed to determine the projected potential savings. We benefitted from the fellowship and we will never look at our overhead lights the same way. There were lots of benefits to making the changes and cost was central but not even the most important. For instance, we have bulbs that are burned out, with the current system we are told that we are paying for the bulb as if it is being used. They are now a part of our plan for better stewardship over the blessing of having a house of worship.