



FCGG NEWSLETTER

Volume II, Issue 1

Winter 2025

Evergreen Presbyterian Earth Care



The Earth Care project at Evergreen Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati is entering its 5th year, and we continue to look for new ways to inspire our congregation and our neighbors to be good stewards of creation. We hold monthly recycling collections, take nature walks, hold informative seminars, and regularly feature creation care prayers, anthems and hymns in our Sunday services. Our biggest project for 2025 will see us building on the success of our first Earth Care Festival in 2024.

Last year, more than 40 church volunteers (approximately 60% of our active congregation) helped stage the first festival with

eighteen booths providing information, tips, and examples of caring for God's creation. Local organizations included the Cincinnati Recycle and Reuse Hub, Faith Communities Go Green, the Climate Reality Project, Drive Electric Cincinnati, the Society of St. Andrew and NEEDS (food insecurity), the Ohio Valley Forestry Fellowship, the League of Women Voters (voter registration), Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church, Our Land Organics (native plants), Sustainability Cooperative (solar education) and Gorman Heritage Farm (organic gardening).

Church-sponsored booths gave away tree seedlings, samples of laundry deter-

gent sheets, and a meatless cookbook created by the congregation. We held a sale of homegrown plants, decorated the festival with "earth care" pledge ribbons, and introduced visitors to the wonders of leaf-cutter bees, a super pollinator.

Our Kids Zone offered recycled craft projects, a scavenger hunt for pollinators, face painting, and a pollinator-themed bean bag toss. Music, a bake sale, and ice cream booth (staffed by the Boy Scouts) rounded out the day. More than 50 of our neighbors enjoyed the festival, learned more about creation care, and experienced the love of the people of Evergreen Presbyterian Church.

Jesuit Family Parish Healthy Earth Team

by Laurie Roche

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Bellarmine Chapel's Healthy Earth Team and also the work that inspired its creation: Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*.

In January we expanded to include St. Xavier Church

and are now called the Jesuit Parish Family Healthy Earth Team. Our group has grown to a dozen active members with other interested people following along via our email list.

In celebration, we are creating an anthology of original works (art and photog-

raphy, writing, videos) from our parishioners called: *Praise be to You: An Anthology of Hope and Healing for Creation* which will be published in print and online in September.

We have developed numerous community

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Healthy Earth Team cont'd



partnerships and continue to expand and enhance our major projects including:

- Embracing God's Creation: a collaborative project of the Cincinnati Jesuit Works, now in its fourth year and involving speakers, films, immersion experiences, volunteering, and advocacy. The first year concluded with a retreat. There have been some 1,000 participants in the series.
- Nexus Community Garden and Urban Farm: on the campus of Xavier University this space includes garden beds for rental, educational events, potlucks, and community gardens that in 2024 yielded 700 pounds of vegetables donated to food pantries.
- Active Discipleship Day: Held three times a year in conjunction with the parishes and Xavier students, this is a day of service at a variety of community sites, including gardens and parks.
- Earth Day Mass and giveaway of native trees, shrubs and seeds.

All our works, including other efforts not mentioned here, arise from our Catholic faith. Each monthly meeting begins with a prayer or poem followed by a reflection from a member that speaks to a love of creation.

Through all we do, our mission is nothing less than that of Pope Francis in his encyclical: *Laudato Si': A Call for Ecological Conversion*. For more information, please visit our web page at

<https://bellarminechapel.org/social-mission/healthy-earth/>

Facilities Working Group

by Ken Wright

The Facilities Group performed 10 energy assessments at FCGG member houses of worship in 2024. Based on those assessments, we were able to contract with Energility of Columbus to perform certified (ASHRAE) Level 2 energy audits on 8 of those buildings. We are deeply grateful to The Bruggeman Center of Xavier University and to Co-op Cincy for their financial support that made these audits possible. Most granting agencies, especially governmental ones, require an ASHRAE Level 2 energy audit to identify and document energy conservation projects to achieve meaningful energy and cost savings on their buildings.

At the January 9th Facilities meeting, **How to Apply for Ohio Energy Efficiency Grants Workshop**, Nikki Vandivort and Kristin Barker explained Ohio grant opportunities,

1. Energy Efficiency Program for Ohio

Communities Audit Support (E E P O C A S guidelines) <https://development.ohio.gov/community/redevelopment/energy-efficiency-program>

provides low or no-cost ASHRAE Level 2 energy audits for Ohio non-profits, provided you use one of their approved contractors listed on their website. Contact one of these contractors directly and tell them you are interested in an ASHRAE Level 2 audit under the Ohio Energy Efficiency Program.

2. Ohio Energy Efficiency Program for Manufacturers/Non-manufacturers (E E P M / N M guidelines)

<https://development.ohio.gov/community/redevelopment/ohio-energy-efficiency-program>

has a pool of \$800,000 from which grants in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range will be awarded. All eligible

projects must be completed by July 31, 2025, and no projects can start before grant funds are awarded. Submit a proposal as soon as possible. Go to the link provided, download the Program Guidelines, and read them carefully. If interested in applying, contact facilities@fcgg.org or someone else experienced in applying for these grants.

Their third program closed February 17th. Watch for more grant opportunities to rollout.

For more information, visit our webpage, <https://fcgg.org/facilities/>. Click on **Toolkit: "How to Apply for Ohio Energy Efficiency Grants"** on the right side and **open the "About EEI"** box at the bottom of the Facilities page and visit. .



A Covenant for the Earth

by Anas Malik

Religious groups can help to heal damage to our social and ecological systems. Prominent teachings from different religions can inspire and support collective action within and across communities. Some readers will be familiar with Laudato Si (Praise Be), the Catholic teaching issued ten years ago. This eloquent and inspiring document addresses care for our common home and has become a critical reference point in various Catholic organizations.

In the Muslim context, a recent document, Al-Mizan (The Balance: A Covenant for the Earth; <https://www.almizan.earth>) has the potential to spark collective action. Al-Mizan has

been compared to Laudato Si. Both emphasize our role as stewards. Both draw substantively on religious traditions far older than the current crisis. And both note that there is a collaborative collective and multi-level aspect to our response.

There are important differences, primarily to do with emphasis. Al-Mizan highlights the unsustainable economics of currency and usury, which pit infinite demand against finite resources. Al-Mizan also calls on conservation via the traditional Islamic practice of charitable endowments, called waqf.

Another difference has to do with how the message of the documents is spread.

The Roman Catholic context has a central hierarchy, and this facilitates the rapid spread of a religious teaching. The Islamic context is mostly decentralized, without a mechanism for cutting through the noise. Yet there is also a strength: self-organization among Muslim communities can be vigorous and propel needed collective action.

Al-Mizan is not well-known at this point. To promote its teachings, we must publicly recognize Al-Mizan within the local Muslim community and in inter religious settings. Together, Muslims, Catholics, and others can act to care for our common home and make a difference. Visit <https://www.almizan.earth> to learn more.

Society of St. Andrew

by Sue Plummer

Glean Locally Grown Food with Society of St. Andrew This Season

Gleaning is an ancient practice that translates, today, into farmers inviting volunteers to harvest crops they won't be taking to market. This is some of the freshest food available to those who rarely have access to it. If you'd like to become a gleaner this season (generally May/June - October) - whether on a farm or at a farmers' market - you can sign up on our platform at <https://www.mobilize.us/endhunger/event/601268> or via the QR code below.

Also, look for year round opportunities to rescue and share delicious food

with your hungry neighbors! For more info: sw-ohio@endhunger.org or 513-458-9808.

Also, here are some other ways to get involved: <https://endhunger.org/lead/>, as well as a flyer you can print and post for your congregation.

Anticipated shifts in 2025 We were blessed, in 2024, with 5 new weekly farm gleaning opportunities in/near the I-275 beltway during the 2024 gleaning season. We expect to return to these farms, again, this year. Starting in June, look for gleaning shifts in the following areas:

Tuesday mornings:

Indian Hill

Mt. Airy

Wednesday mornings

Melbourne, KY

Thursday mornings

College Hill and/or Morrow

Friday mornings

Evendale

Farmers Markets

Tuesday evenings (year round) -

Findlay Market

Thursday evenings (May - Dec) - Ma-
deira

Saturdays @ noon (May - Oct) -
Montgomery

Sundays @12:15 (May - Oct) - Hyde
Park



SCAN ME





To learn more and join Faith Communities Go Green, a Green Umbrella and EquaSion collaboration, go to: www.fcgg.org

Join a Working Group

Advocacy: Contact Ariel at

Advocacy@fcgg.org

Facilities: Contact Ken at

Facilities@fcgg.org

Education/Lifestyles: Contact Becca at

Education@fcgg.org

Membership Engagement: Contact Donna at

fcggmembers@gmail.com

Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World

by Susan Fox

The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben tells how trees help one another, both amongst family groups but also across species. Who knew that trees help each other? Well, the Indigenous have long known, but that is another story. Trees help their children, even as they're dying. Trees help one another in so many ways as well as other flora and fauna in their neighborhood.

Serviceberry by Robin Wall Kimmerer, is about "All Flourishing is Mutual." Each of us will do better if we all live in a "gift economy," where we interact, not in a world of extractive economies, but in a sense of gratitude and community. If we see the Earth and all she has as property to be owned, with limited resources that we have to get before they're gone instead of a generous fellow creation that provides enough for all, we'll live a life of covetousness and self-centeredness and we and the Earth will be much poorer for it. If instead, we live as part of the endless cycle enjoying, sharing, rebirth, and community, there will always be enough. That is how Nature lives.

Advocacy

by Ariel Miller

In 2025, don't despair: discover new paths for advocacy. The huge roll-backs in federal environmental action and the Ohio Legislature's favoritism towards fossil fuels are heartbreaking. Historians and theologians have been reporting on the authoritarian strategy of overwhelming us by the sheer flood and relentless cruelty of their power: shock and awe.

Don't give up: these governments are not the only forces at work. In 2025, FCGG's Advocacy Team invites you to help us find unexpected allies and forge new paths to restore ecological balance and build environmental justice. We have tremendous resources right here: the regional climate collaborative Green Umbrella, the Green Cincinnati Plan, and the growing successes of other TriState communities in sustainability.

We suggest you start by watching the powerful Dec. 16, 2024 talk by Dr.

Jonathan Foley of Project Drawdown: "Together, We Can: How to move climate solutions forward in 2025." Project Drawdown's Climate Roadmap prioritizes the solutions which are the most effective, affordable, and fast. Drawdown's top solutions include several emergency breaks: actions which we can implement immediately to achieve maximum impact in reducing carbon emissions.

Preventing methane emissions is "the fastest [emergency brake] because its greenhouse gas impact is so awful," Foley explained. This is feasible because satellite data can pinpoint pipeline leaks and other point sources. Foley also points out that clean energy and energy-saving solutions like solar panels, LED lights, and batteries are spreading exponentially due to dramatic drops in price and improvements in capacity and efficiency. These are small, modular technologies that are being rapidly scaled.

Since emissions prevented anywhere benefit the entire planet, we're going to be focusing on what we can accomplish by bringing together the faith community, local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders to prevent methane leaks and give more people access to energy efficiency and solar power. With your help, we'll share stories of faith communities' succeeding against enormous odds in overcoming environmental problems.

Let's also build the case for win-win solutions that save lives, health, and money. Watch for in-person meetings and newsletters with links to webinars offered by faith leaders and outstanding national and global nonprofits. Reach out to us at advocacy@fcgg if you'd like to help plan workshops to forge the hope and tools for the essential work of loving and healing this planet.