

---

**A PROJECT LAUNCHES . . . AND OUR DIOCESE HAS BEEN INVOLVED**



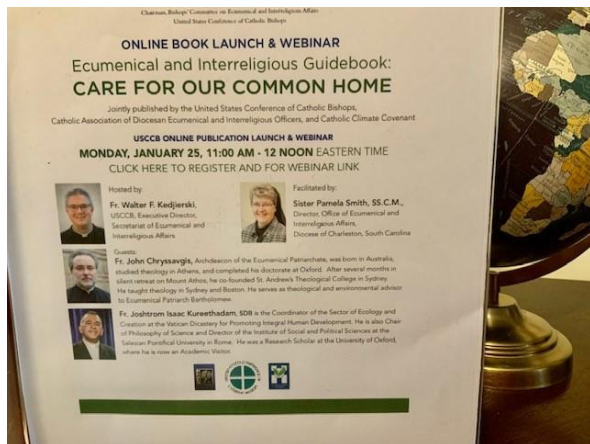
One of many Zoom meetings with consultants from the USCCB, CADEIO, and Catholic Climate Covenant



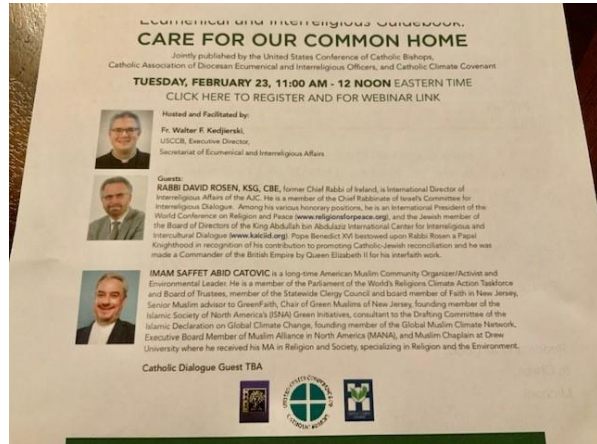
The finished product, *Ecumenical and Interreligious Guidebook: Care for Our Common Home*, launched January 25

A casual conversation over a table of books on display at the National Workshop on Christian Unity in 2019 began a project which extended from the summer of 2019 through December 2020. A committee representing several offices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, CADEIO (Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers), and Catholic Climate Covenant was tasked with the project of producing a contribution to ongoing implementation of *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis has urged the whole Church to embark on a 7-year plan to make a real difference in our attitudes and actions on behalf of "Our Common Home," planet Earth.

The committee preparing the guidebook was joined by theologians and a representative of the Franciscan Action Network. Sister Pamela Smith, Charleston's diocesan director and author of several works on environmental topics (including a doctoral dissertation, *Aquinas and Today's Environmental Ethics*), was appointed chair. On January 25, 2021, the guidebook was released. It includes theological underpinnings regarding Catholic beliefs about creation, a series of questions in the form of examination of conscience, action prompts, observances of feastdays and the Season of Creation, homily helps, and practical suggestions for both ecumenical-interreligious dialogue and common projects. The hope is that the guidebook will raise consciousness and also encourage positive behaviors to help the local bioregions in which people of faith reside. As a contribution to the 7-year plan for implementation of *Laudato Si'*, dialogues will continue for a number of months in the form of webinars hosted by the USCCB through its Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and CADEIO. The first dialogue included Father John Chryssavgis, archdeacon to Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew and Father Jostrom Kureethadam, who focuses on environment with the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. On February 23, the dialogue will feature Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic leaders.



Advertising the launch of the Guidebook  
January 25, 2021



Continuing the conversation for common action  
February 23, 2021

## LOCAL FAITHS JOIN FORCES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND MUTUAL SUPPORT

As reported in September’s newsletter, Rabbi Brad Bloom of Beth Yam Synagogue in Hilton Head has spurred on ecumenical and interreligious events in the Beaufort Deanery. The first such event was held with Rabbi Bloom, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Black (AME Church), and Sister Pam sharing insights and faith about “Dealing with the Unthinkable” (both the pandemic and civil unrest) on October 26, with the event livestreamed from the synagogue. This was followed on November 4 by a Zoom broadcast in which the threesome talked about how to deal with faith and politics in the aftermath of the election. Then on December 16, Rabbi Bloom, Reverend Black, and Sister Pam were joined by Reverend Therese Lee of Hilton Head’s Unity Church and Bishop Craig Dixon of the Church of Latter Day Saints to share Advent-Hanukkah-Christmas customs and how our various faith traditions observe them. This session was again livestreamed and also recorded and posted on the Beth Yam Facebook page and website. Upcoming, with the date still to be announced, is a session in which the group will talk about the significance of Lent, Passover, and Easter and how our various traditions observe these.



Presenters and musicians at the Winter Holy Days observance at Beth Yam Synagogue, Hilton Head

---

## OTHER ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS WORK FOR THE COMMON GOOD

While so many face-to-face activities remain curtailed, the South Carolina Christian Action Council has both participated in shared prayer events and also continued to circulate information about opportunities for the general public to receive assistance in the midst of the pandemic. It has also been busy about seeking a new Executive Minister and CEO to replace Reverence Brenda Kneece, who has led the Council for more than 20 years. The Diocese of Charleston is one of 13 denominations supporting the Council. Shown below is a display banner from an event held October 19 at Reformation Lutheran Church in Columbia. It was a service of readings and prayers offered by members of various faith traditions to honor those who have died and those who have lost loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. We were on hand among the socially distanced representatives of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist communities. This event was also livestreamed, with persons from all across the states joining in as each of us read from our sacred scriptures and offered a prayer. The photo below shows the display that provided backdrop to the livestreamed event.



The South Carolina Christian Action Council (SCCAC) has been active in the legislature to advocate for assistance to impoverished areas in the state, especially when it comes to protecting people from predatory lending and also directing them to educational and medical resources. The Council has forwarded much helpful information, which we have shared with Catholic schools and other diocesan agencies.

After an extended process of deliberation, receiving applications, and conducting interviews with applicants for the leadership of the SCCAC, the search committee and board determined on January 21 to invite Reverend Regina Moore, a United Methodist minister with national and international experience, to lead the organization. Rev. Moore not only brings pastoral gifts to the role but also advocacy for youth and the poor, technological and fund raising savvy, and entrepreneurial experience.



### **ANOTHER GROUP DISTINGUISHES ITSELF WITH ACTIVITY DURING THE PANDEMIC**

On December 31, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster declared January 2021 Interfaith Harmony Month. That, not surprisingly, prompted an array of online activities by members of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina (IPSC), another group in which we are represented not only by our diocesan office but also by Catholic parishioners from several places around the state.

While January was a peak time of activity, IPSC has continued over the past year to host “Monthly Meet-ups” among the members. These meet-ups include time to share events of mutual interest, information about health initiatives during the pandemic, education and resources to contact concerning human trafficking, non-violence and social reform, and various state-national-international concerns. The IPSC shared generously in getting the word out about the environmental guidebook launch featured on the first page. The group also provided opportunities to share information about our own faith traditions. Among the January events in which we had representation were informative sessions on the Latter Day Saints and common myths about those called Mormons, indigenous religions around the world, and the Black Catholic experience (in which IPSC joined the Charleston Interfaith Council in promoting its events). An intriguing event closing out the month will be Aiken’s Interfaith Human Library in which individuals representing various faith traditions make presentations and allow themselves to be questioned as the “book” representing their faith. Aiken Catholics are represented in this program.

Another benefit of belonging to IPSC has been the opportunity to get to know two members of the State Department of Aging and help that office get contact information (phone numbers, email addresses, and names of leading individuals) in Catholic agencies, social outreach centers, and ethnic ministries. The intent of the agency is to find as many ways as possible to reach isolated elderly people and to use churches and faith-based services to connect on such things as COVID testing, vaccines, and finding sources for needed assistance. Conference calls and referrals have improved the communications chain.

---

### **AND THEN THERE ARE MORE THINGS BUILDING UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION**

Throughout these months of virtual ecumenism, we have also participated quite regularly with a number of groups online: Rumi Forum, Anti-Defamation League, Greenfaith, the Confronting Hate discussion group, and occasionally with Atlantic Institute. All of these have sponsored events which help build understanding among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, bring people together to meet human needs, promote racial justice, and work toward world peace by modeling respectful listening and sharing. We look forward to more events and efforts—online and in person—in months to come.

