

TOGETHER IN FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP No. 4

OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL & INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS MAY-JUNE 2021
DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

GOING GREEN WITH OTHERS

Greenfaith’s Environmental Action Day on March 11, Earth Day on April 22, and dialogues through May on Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’* have sparked interfaith conversation and accountability. A long-time dictum, “Think Globally, Act Locally,” has prompted dialogue partners to undertake special projects, get together via Zoom, and join with interfaith and ecumenical groups nearby to raise consciousness. In our diocese, we have been involved with both Greenfaith and Interfaith Power and Light and also have participated in programs offered by our diocesan Office of Ethnic Ministries. This year’s Earth Day observance by the latter particularly focused on Native American traditions.

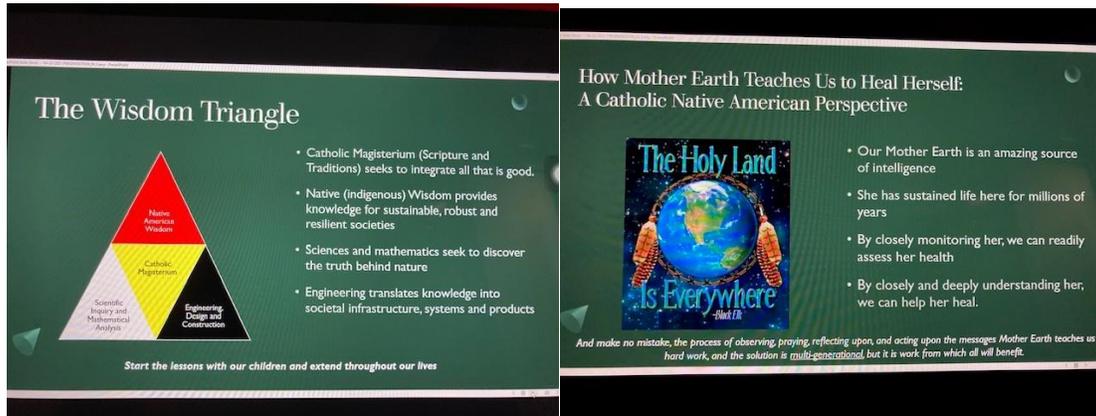
We start by appreciating and beautifying our own little corner—Bluffton and St. Helena Island—and then cite Pope Francis: In some neighborhoods poverty has “restricted people’s access to places of particular beauty.” Beautifying areas where marginalized people are regularly served honors God.



Chicago’s Interfaith Dialogue on the Bible and the Environment—a coalition connected with CADEIO (Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers)—has us joining in.



Deacon Larry Deschaine shared Native American wisdom and Catholic thought on environmental issues during our diocesan Ethnic Ministries Earth Day observance.



Interfaith Power and Light, with a branch in Greenville, presented information about ecological impacts on minority groups



The Gullah Geechee queen, of St. Helena Island, joined newscasters, religious leaders, and researchers from Greenville to offer input on soil erosion and waterway pollution affecting her local community.



The USCCB, Catholic Climate Covenant, and CADEIO will be launching more dialogues on how to “Care for Our Common Home” in coming months, prompted by the guidebook cited in our No. 3 newsletter.

PROMOTING INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING AROUND THE NATION AND IN OUR STATE

The Interfaith Partners of South Carolina (which includes several Columbia-based Catholics), the Interfaith Partners of Aiken (with Bill Collins of St. Mary, Help of Christians being an active representative), the Rumi Forum (based in Washington, DC), the Anti-Defamation League, the Atlantic Institute, and the National Workshop on Christian Unity have hosted numerous events this spring to promote ecumenism, Jewish-Muslim understanding among young adults, to invite people into Ramadan observances, and to promote Christian-Jewish understanding. Throughout each month, there are events and activities in which South Carolinians can join, with frequent opportunities to be inserted into chat rooms to promote closer dialogue. Among events in which we have participated are not only the Christian-Jewish-Islamic conversations but also a presentation by Cardinal Wilton Gregory on *Fratelli Tutti* (May, Rumi Forum) and eye-opening conversations with neo-pagans and secular humanists. The recurrent theme is the importance of LISTENING.

Some of the Rumi Forum participants on May 20, responding to a keynote by Cardinal Gregory.



We should note that the Rumi Forum is connected with an Islamic group from Turkey which was instrumental in placing a few students at our Cardinal Newman School in Columbia several years ago. This group is committed to working with Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and others on religious freedom and has promoted the theme “We Refuse to Be Enemies.” Among its ongoing programs is a monthly series on “Scriptural reasoning,” focused on the Abrahamic religions.

PLANNING AHEAD

South Carolina Christian Action Council

Board meetings in February, March, and May have introduced the 14 member denominations to the organization's new Executive Minister, Rev. Dr. Regina Moore. At its June meeting, the board will be strategizing with Dr. Moore to continue advocacy with the state legislature concerning predatory lending through the many payday loan businesses in the state, continuing the press for improvements in public education, and promoting racial justice. We have had the opportunity to meet personally with Dr. Moore to shed light on Catholic social teaching and pro-life ethics to assure that, as a voice in the organization, we help to shape the council's actions and statements.



The "Group of Five"

Actually dubbed by Rabbi Brad Bloom the "Gang of Five," Catholic, Jewish, AME, Unity Church, and Latter Day Saints gather often for conversations, hot topics, and meals (such as Holy Week/Passover Seder) at Beth Yam Synagogue in Hilton Head. Watch for announcements about upcoming events.

Confronting Hate Group

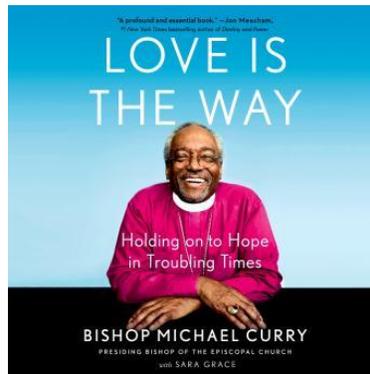
This discussion group typically meets on a Saturday morning from 10:00-11:30, discussing books and events in the news with a focus on building inter-racial understanding and looking to local opportunities to bring people together. This initiative originated with the Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops in November 2019 and has continued in Bluffton-Hilton Head-Beaufort since, with only a brief pandemic interruption. The group has examined racism in church groups and society and has pinpointed recent attacks on Asian and Pacific Islanders in the U.S., along with the legacy of slavery and segregation.



Meeting every 4-6 weeks. Contact:
psmith@charlestdiocese.org

October 30, 2021—Time and Location To Be Announced

The Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops is planning a dialogue on the theme of “The Cost of Beloved Community” with Bishop Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in America, on Saturday, October 30. This is slated in conjunction with scheduled presentations he will be making at the University of South Carolina. The Fellowship includes our state’s Lutheran, United Methodist, Episcopalian, African Methodist Episcopal, Roman Catholic, and Christian Methodist Episcopal bishops.



Late Summer, Early Fall

Bishop Guglielmone has approved plans for us to go forward with forming an Ecumenical-Interfaith Advisory Committee. One of the tasks will be updating a diocesan Guidebook on ecumenical and interreligious activities for use in our parishes, schools, and fraternal organizations. **We are seeking recommendations from pastors for persons who might be willing to serve on such a committee, so that we can present to the Bishop a proposed group representing all of our deaneries. Meetings generally are expected to be online.**



Contact us: Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs
Diocese of Charleston
(843) 819-7991 or email: psmith@charlestandiocese.org