

TOGETHER IN FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP No. 6

OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL & INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

JUNE 2022



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PRAYING AND FUND-RAISING FOR THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE



Around the world, across the state, and throughout the Church people are banding together to come to the aid of the people of Ukraine. The Beaufort deanery (led by Monsignor Ronald Cellini) has joined this cause in ecumenical and interfaith gatherings. On Palm Sunday, Lowcountry Presbyterian Church hosted United Methodist, Society of Friends, Jewish, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic faith leaders in public prayer. On Sunday, May 22 a group sparked by Rabbi Brad Bloom, Hilton Head mayor John McCann, and representatives of Jewish, Latter Day Saints, Lutheran, Unity Spiritual, and Roman Catholic denominations gathered for prayer, musical presentations, testimony from young adults with family in Ukraine, food, and music and raised more than \$130,000 for Doctors without Borders and World Central Kitchens.





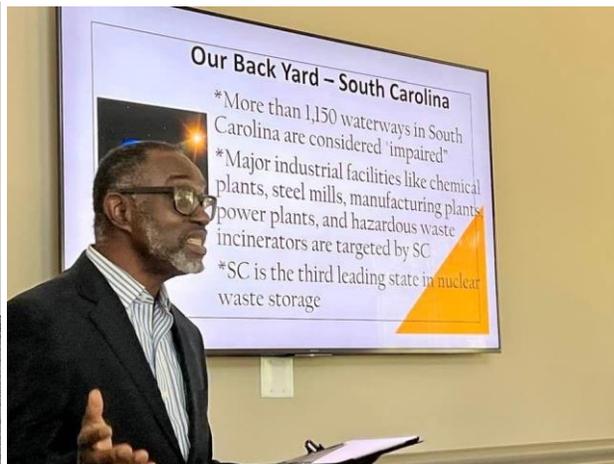
CARE FOR THE EARTH

In November 2021, our diocese and others, religious communities, Catholic educational and health care institutions, and more signed on to the Laudato Si' Action Platform, at the encouragement of the Vatican and Pope Francis. The platform develops the theme of Care for Our Common Home. After presentations to the Presbyteral Council and the diocesan Curia, a number of activities have ensued.

Above is the Creation Care Committee of St. Andrew Church, Clemson, shown after a weekend of eco-minded presentations and events, including a Friday evening potluck for the core committee, a Saturday presentation open to parishioners, and talks at Saturday and Sunday evening Masses.

May 4, at the National Workshop on Christian Unity hosted by Christ Cathedral, Orange, California, Sister Pam Smith joined Father Michael Lynch and Father Bob Flannery to make a presentation on how to implement ecumenical and interfaith dialogues and action plans to care for creation and raise popular awareness. Sister Pam and Father Lynch are members of the Care for Creation committee of CADEIO (Catholic Directors of Ecumenical and Interfaith Offices) and have worked with the USCCB on its initiatives. Father Bob Flannery does similar work with the Parliament of the World's Religions.

On May 11, representatives of Jewish, Quaker, Latter-day Saints, United Methodist, Presbyterian, and African Methodist Episcopal faiths gathered at St. Gregory the Great to share not only global concerns but information about water crises affecting places like Denmark, South Carolina.



SO MANY CAUSES UNITE US



The South Carolina Christian Action Council (SCCAC) on which we hold a board membership, advocates for racial justice, investment in education, prison reform, intercultural understanding, and many other causes and commitments shared by Catholics. In recent years, it has been very involved in advocating for an end, via specific legislation, to predatory lending—by capping interest rates that can be charged by title loan and payday loan groups. Aside from lobbying, it has joined the South Carolina Fair Lending Alliance for prayer and public awareness efforts. Fourteen Christian denominations are represented on the SCCAC board.

In February members of the SCCAC allied themselves with another group, South Carolinians for Alternative to the Death Penalty (SCADP). This group is hosting monthly meetings, with book studies and discussions, and alerts members to pending executions and opportunities for legislative action. Shown below are main speakers in a February meeting and a screen shot from the May discussion, led by author Maurice Chamman, who has investigated death penalty cases, conditions on death row, and chaplains serving those convicted of capital crimes. Books studied to date include *The Child in the Electric Chair*, Eli Faber (a South Carolina case), *Executing Grace: How the Death Penalty Killed Jesus and Why It's Killing Us*, Shane Claiborne; the well-known *Dead Man Walking*, Sister Helen Prejean.



INTERFAITH HARMONY GOES ON

Every January, the governor declares Interfaith Harmony Month. That means that members of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina (another organization in which we hold board membership), the Interfaith Partners of Aiken (led by Bill Collins of St. Mary Help of Christians and supported by Aiken dean Father Greg Wilson), the Charleston Interreligious Council, and the Atlantic Institute all feature a number of events. Pictured below are some of the meet-ups that drew together people of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian faiths, neopagans, and spiritual seekers. Sharing of customs, cultures, and habits of eating and fasting were among the topics. As the Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate* urged us, we find that respectful listening and learning and emphasizing those points we hold in common win us friends and persons with whom we can collaborate on behalf of the common good of society.



Along with numerous online events, Masjid Noor-UI-Huda Islamic Mosque, Columbia, welcomed many of the IPSC members—in person and virtually—on Friday evening, January 28.



Interfaith Events, continued

On the statewide level, the Interfaith Partners of Aiken, try to meet the third Thursday of every month and avidly highlight local area events in which they can cooperate. Regulars at the meetings include

Catholic, Latter-day Saints, and Islamic participants, along with occasional members of various Protestant denominations. The group takes a special interest in promoting interracial cooperation and confronting anti-Semitism.



One of the online events was an extended interview with Father Michael K. Holleran (left, below), an expert on Catholic-Buddhist dialogue, presented by the Trappists at Mepkin Abbey on January 20.

Mepkin is hosting a Pentecost Ecumenical event, which will include prayer and a concert of music by Cormac O’Duffy on Pentecost Sunday, June 5, at 4 P.M. The music is inspired by the prison poems of Father Max Josef Metzger, a renowned ecumenist, who died in a Nazi concentration camp.

The Abbey is also working with our diocesan Office of Ethnic Ministries and its African American initiatives to arrange for an installation of a sculpture, “In the Father’s Hand,” to memorialize the African American slaves who were buried on the Abbey property long before the monks settled there.



Interfaith Events, continued

On the same day as the Buddhist-Catholic conversation, the Anti-Defamation League featured government officials in a discussion on civility and tolerance in public life, as part of their “Fighting Hate from Home” initiative.



On January 24, the College of Charleston partnered with the Charleston Interreligious Council to sponsor a discussion on customs and prayer intentions with Christian, Jewish, and Islamic community leaders.



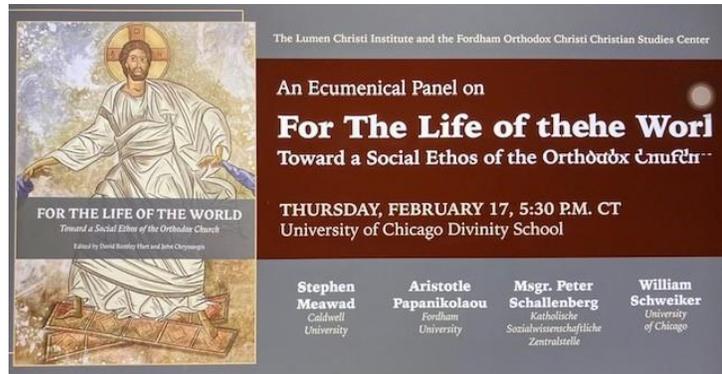
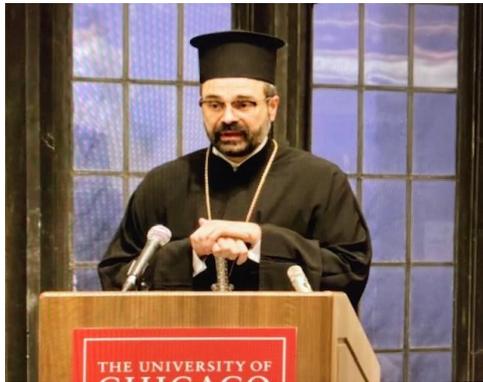
Another active group is Rumi Forum, based in Washington. Each month it hosts sessions on Scriptural Reasoning. A topic is examined in the light of texts from the Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament, and the Koran. On January 26 it also featured multiple religious groups in what it called “multi-faith supplication” for our nation and world.



Dear Pastors and Parish Administrators: At the National Workshop on Christian Unity we received compliments on our diocesan ecumenical-interreligious handbook. At the same time, we know it needs updating. IF YOU HAVE A PARISHIONER OR STAFF MEMBER TO RECOMMEND, please contact Sister Pam psmith@charlestdiocese.org. Many thanks

Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue

It has been quite noticeable that Pope Francis has quoted abundantly from Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew. He has worked cooperatively with him on popularizing the Season of Creation (September 1-October 4, feast of St. Francis of Assisi) and noted his work on behalf of creation and human fraternity in his encyclicals *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. On February 17, 2022, the University of Chicago hosted an ecumenical panel discussion entitled “Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church.” Much of the discussion turned on the text *For the Life of the World*, which has a focus on how deeply spiritual, sacramental people confront the situations of contemporary life.



At the National Workshop on Christian Unity there was also a morning which focused on Orthodox spirituality and inter-church relations, with the highlight being a keynote by Archbishop Elpidophorus. We should note that, while the number of Orthodox Christians is not large in South Carolina, we have areas in the state where relations are very congenial, and both St. Gregory the Great in Bluffton and John Paul II Catholic School in Ridgeland have offered space for Orthodox worship for a number of years. Understanding the Orthodox also grows as we look into the history of the Eastern Catholic rites in union with Rome.



For understanding of Eastern Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox traditions and relations from the 1960s on, see biographies of Saint Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council documents *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. The Orientale Lumen Foundation hosts annual conferences which are typically held in person and (still this year) online in June.

And the Faiths Celebrate Our New Bishop

The May 13th ordination of Most Reverend Jacques Fabre Jeune included a number of bishops and persons of influence in the ecumenical realm. Rev. Dr. Regina Moore, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council joined Bishop Jonathan Holsten, South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church; Bishop Samuel Green, African Methodist Episcopal Church; Bishop Ruth Morse Woodliff-Stanley, Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina; Bishop Charles (Chip) Edgar, Anglican Diocese of South Carolina at the ceremony. Aside from those in attendance, many faith leaders have offered congratulations and look forward to opportunities to meet our new bishop.



All of the groups cited in this newsletter continue with events on a monthly, and sometimes more frequent basis. Numerous updates also are available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), through its committees on the following: Cultural Diversity in the Church, Domestic Justice and Human Development, Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs, international Justice and Peace, Pro-Life Activities, and Religious Liberty.

Also watch for updates and presentations from Interfaith Power and Light and Greenfaith regarding care for the earth and care for the poor affected by ecological disasters.