

# TOGETHER IN FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP No. 7

OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL & INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS  
DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

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## CONTACT

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## FROM PENTECOST THROUGH THE SEASON OF CREATION

### Pentecost at Mepkin—and a Note about Upcoming Events at Mepkin

Mepkin Abbey has long been noted for its cultural programs and its hospitality to retreatants and religious groups. On Pentecost Sunday, June 2, it offered a late afternoon ecumenical gathering of prayer entitled “That All May Be One.” Both Bishop Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS, and Bishop Guglielmone were in attendance, as were a number of Protestant clergy from the area. Along with prayer, Scriptural reading, and a sermon preached by Rev. Tory Liferidge of Grace Reformed Episcopal Church, Moncks Corner, was a stunning orchestral and choral performance. The piece was an extended musical reflection on the prison poems of Father Max Josef Metzger, founder of the ecumenical “Una Sancta” movement in Germany and a victim of the Nazi regime. Father Metzger’s life and work inspired Cormac O’Duffy, well known in Catholic circles, to compose the piece. Another of O’Duffy’s works, “Mary: An Oratorio,” is slated for presentation at Mepkin on Sunday, December 4, immediately after the Abbey’s annual pre-Advent Christmas crèche exhibit.



Left: Rev. Tory Liferidge preaches as Bishop Fabre-Jeune, CS, and Father Joseph Tedesco. OCSO, look on.

Right: Seated behind SSCM sisters from Bluffton are composer Cormac O’Duffy and his wife. (Photos continued on the next page.)



Left: Members of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra and the Robert Taylor chorus prepare to perform Father Max Josef Metzger's Prison Poems.

Right: Bishop Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS, offers words of inspiration to the crowd gathered for Pentecost prayer.



Left: The planning committee included Sister Pam Smith, SS.C.M., Charleston musician and philanthropist Ellen Moryl, Mepkin superior Father Joseph Tedesco, and Cormac O'Duffy, who was not in the photo.

Right: At the conclusion of the concert and closing prayer clergy in attendance joined in offering a final blessing.

### **International Friendship Day 2022 and a Day with the Daughters of St. Paul**

July 30 has been designated International Friendship Day. A new group with a special commitment to Catholic social teaching and ecumenical action determined to host a potluck that day at St. Gregory the Great Parish Life Center. Catholics for the Common Good invited not only St. Gregory parishioners but members of Bluffton-Hilton Head faith communities who have already been active in interfaith events in that area. The first-time potluck drew Catholics, Presbyterians, African Methodist Episcopalians, Methodists and others. The group determined to make this an annual event. On July 31, the Daughters of St. Paul opened the doors of their Pauline bookstore in Charleston to another interfaith event. Author Daniel Kalman Epstein was on hand to present the research which resulted in the publication *Portraits in Faith*.



Photos above show some of the celebrants of the International Friendship Day Potluck sponsored by Catholics for the Common Good, Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church, Bluffton.



Left: Daniel Epstein shares the story of his interviews with people of diverse faith traditions to listeners at the Pauline Book Store on King Street, Charleston.  
 Right: The audience included a Greek Orthodox member of the Charleston Interreligious Council and a Hindu member of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina.



Epstein's massive study included a Catholic nun from Italy and an aborigine elder who practices his tribal religion Australia. The overall project included 500 interviews with people of various faith traditions in 27 countries. 130 are represented in Epstein's book.

## Into August and September

Numerous interfaith and ecumenical groups continued their online meetings throughout the summer months and into the fall. One major live event was one which prepared in a special way for the Season of Creation, which Catholic and Orthodox communities celebrate from September 1 through October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. This year special attention was given to the global need for clean water. The Christian group called Water Mission operates from a massive factory complex in North Charleston. It sends water purification systems and solar panels to provide energy to many remote places in the world. While concentrating on blighted areas of Africa, Asia, and South and Central America, it has also been shipping to refugee camps in Europe and, particularly in recent times, to those housing Ukrainians who are on the move. After an ecumenical group visited the mission in late August, it prepared for a Walk for Water held on Saturday, September 17 in the Lowcountry. The project raised tens of thousands of dollars to support the production of the purification systems and their shipping overseas. Nearly all of the work of the Water Mission, including the construction of the purification apparatus, is done by volunteers who are retired engineers, scientific specialists, and mechanics.



Right: Entry to Water Mission work complex, with flags of the many countries served.

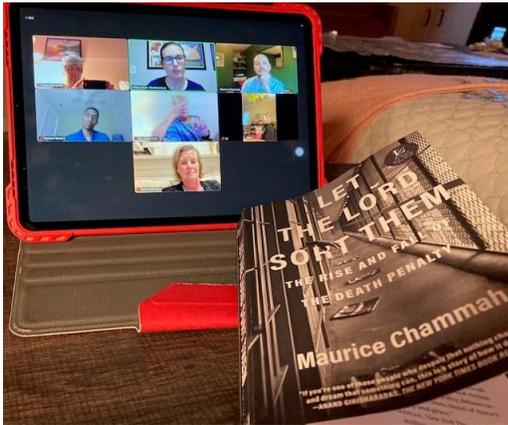
Left: Water purification apparatus wrapped for shipping.

Below: Walkers gathered by May River, Bluffton. The buckets provide an object lesson about the number of people who walk miles to get water for families and villages.



## Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue Online: A Wider World

All of the activities above are ones in which our diocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs had an active role. We also serve on the boards of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina, the South Carolina Christian Action Council, and South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (SCADP). Throughout the summer, these groups maintained a regular schedule of online meetings, interviews, webinars, and book discussions.



Left: The monthly book selection for August for the core group of South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.

Right: Father Edwin Arrison, a close friend and colleague of the late Bishop Desmond Tutu, joined SCADP members in September for a discussion of Tutu's *The Book of Forgiveness*, co-written with his daughter Mphu Tutu.

In addition to these, groups like the Rumi Forum, located in Washington, DC, invited participants into discussions of various interfaith topics and its regularly featured Scriptural Reasoning seminars, which discuss selected topics from the viewpoint of Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures, and the Koran.

Another interfaith group, which we have joined, at the recommendation of Dr. Alison McLetchie of South Carolina State University (also a regular on our diocesan Ethnic Ministries programs), is the Conference on Theology in the Caribbean Today. That group meets several times a year and includes many Catholics, representatives of other Christian denominations, Rastafarians, and members of other indigenous spiritual groups.

New City Press, sponsored by the Catholic Focolare movement, has been active in Baptist-Catholic dialogue and, on October 1, sponsored a panel on "Grassroots Ecumenism." This study provides models for lay engagement in ecumenical dialogue and action. The author was joined by a panel, which included Father Alexie Smith of California, a Byzantine Catholic priest who is very active in the USCCB's CADEIO group (Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers), with which our diocese has been regularly involved. We might note that CADEIO's Care for Creation group also met online in September, with Sister Pam as a working member of that group.

## **Around the Deaneries**

Bishop Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS, asked recently for a survey of ecumenical and interfaith activities in the 7 deaneries of the Diocese. From our own experience, and with the help of deans and some parish ecumenical officers, we were able to locate an array of such organizations and events around the state and update our records. Please note that all of our Catholic schools have ecumenical connections. The outreach centers run by Catholic Charities and groups of sisters (Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, Felicians, Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius) are deeply engaged with numerous churches and depend on them for food collections, volunteers, donations, etc. while also serving some of their needy members.

### **Aiken**

Interfaith Partners of Aiken, facilitated by Bill Collins of St. Mary Help of Christians: holds monthly interfaith meet-ups online.

The Center for African American, History, Art and Culture: sponsors events with invitations to local faith leaders and their communities.

### **Beaufort**

St. Gregory the Great: Catholics for the Common Good began as “Confronting Hate” group sponsored by Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops. It has become an official parish group sponsoring ecumenical dialogues and projects and education in Catholic social teaching

Group of Five” —Jewish, Latter Day Saints, AME, Catholic, and Unity Spiritual center, represented by pastors or faith leaders in Hilton Head-Bluffton: has presented multiple interfaith dialogues, done a major fundraiser for Ukraine and is committed to ongoing dialogues and shared celebrations.

Lowcountry Presbyterian Church links with St. Gregory the Great and other faith communities on projects of common interest (water availability, for example)

Bridge Builders of Hilton Head: holds ecumenical discussions and current youth quilting project in which St. Francis by the Sea and St. Gregory youth are slated to participate

### **Charleston**

Charleston Interreligious Council: sponsors dialogues, discussions of holiday/holyday customs of various religious groups, currently seeking more participation of Catholic community

Daughters of St. Paul: continue (until departure) to host discussions and community groups for dialogue and relationship building and also provide hospitality to both tourists and the homeless

Mepkin Abbey: hosts online dialogues and special cultural events; currently engaged in an project to build a sculpture garden to memorialize slaves buried on the abbey property nearly a century before the monks acquired it

## **Columbia**

Interfaith Partners of South Carolina (on which we hold elected board membership): monthly discussions and presentations to promote interfaith understanding; participates in cultural celebrations and peace-making events; holds one live and one online meet-up per month—with Catholic participation.

South Carolina Christian Action Council (on which we hold denominational board membership): hosts online and in-person meetings; engaging in advocacy to end predatory lending and in support of racial injustice; advocates for quality public education; hosts annual ecumenical celebration and lecture

Fellowship of South Carolina Bishops (formerly LARCUM): just before pandemic, initiated “Confronting Hate” ecumenical book discussions; in October 2021 hosted Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry, with Bishop Guglielmone and other bishops present; less active as new bishops for several denominations have come on the scene—future being redefined as multiple denominations have had changes in bishops.

St. Joseph Catholic School: during each year’s Catholic Schools Week, hosts pastors and faith leaders of its non-Catholic students and holds an interfaith prayer service followed by a reception.

Atlantic Institute (based in Greenville) also has an actively interested Columbia group which assisted Turkish students whose parents had been subject to persecution to enroll in Cardinal Newman School.

NERMA: fosters outreach to religious congregations for partnerships with public education in Richland II district

MORE Justice (Midlands Organized Response for Equity and Justice): works with Charleston Area Justice Ministry—interfaith

## **Greenville**

St. Mary Church: celebrates annual Advent and Lenten vespers with invitations to Protestant parishes

Center for Evangelical Catholicism: breakfast meetings six times per year for Greenville business community, with each Catholic member asked to bring a non-Catholic guest

Atlantic Institute: holds monthly or twice monthly programs on contemporary topics, cultural presentations—generally focusing on faith basis; St. Joseph Catholic School, Greenville, has had a spokesperson; preparing to augment their “Tour of Faiths” programs, which feature religious leaders speaking about their traditions and core beliefs

Diocese of Charleston Office of Ethnic Ministries: while focusing on Catholic participants and topics of Catholic interest, its African American and Native American heritage programs and celebrations attract an interfaith population

South Carolinians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (on which we hold elected board membership) hosts monthly online discussions about the death penalty via book discussions; also send out alerts when executions are to be scheduled in Georgia or South Carolina

St. Clare Home: hosts women with problem pregnancies, supports women and children irrespective of religious affiliation

## **Myrtle Beach**

January Christian Unity events: rotating group of churches in the Myrtle Beach area host ecumenical events which coincide with Christian Unity week and the observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (also sometimes known as Freedom Week)

Williamsburg County: cooperative efforts of many area churches linked in prayer and various activities with the Felician Sisters in Kingstree

Springbank Retreat for Eco-Spirituality and the Arts, Kingstree: has worked with Bishop Guglielmone to strengthen Catholic identity; hosts days of prayer, sabbatical program, outdoor organic gardening days, Native American celebrations

## **Rock Hill**

Oratory Center for Spirituality: hosts presentations and retreats on Scripture, discipleship, holiness, appealing to Catholics, an ecumenical audience, and the general public

Oratory Fathers and Brothers: have had long connection with racial justice efforts in the greater Rock Hill area and have received public recognition for such—St. Mary, Rock Hill in particular is involved in Diversity and Immersion Program with Christian focus group dealing with racial issues

St. Philip Neri, Fort Mill: participates in monthly ecumenical service at Wellmore Assisted Living; joins Christian group distributing meals at men's shelter in Charlotte

All Saints, Lake Wylie: involved in monthly ecumenical service at assisted living facility and participate in multi-church mobility service for patients needing transport to doctors; volunteer with other Christian churches to support food pantry—Clover Area Community Services; also distribute water to returning military at Charlotte International airport—an ecumenical project

Divine Savior, York: member in York Clergy Association and HELP LINE, ecumenical service to the poor

Our Lady of Grace, Indian Land: participates in HOPE (ecumenical social outreach center) and in ecumenical chaplaincy at Kershaw Correctional Institution

St. Catherine, Lancaster: participates in HOPE, GRASP (ecumenical group in Great Falls), and Thanksgiving food program with other denominations

Greenfaith: members in nearby Charlotte, NC, hold public actions and online meetings to raise awareness about environmental issues; participants have included cross-border South Carolinians (including Catholics).