

RECOMMENDATIONS



Resources and Staffing

3. Reorganize the Bishop's Committee on the Environment

“If not us, then who? If not now, then when?”

—Congressman John E. Lewis

Recommendation: Reorganize the Bishop’s Committee on the Environment (BCE) to address the current demands of the climate crisis.

Background: Early in the 2000s, the Diocese of Olympia was blessed with individuals whose growing concern about the impacts of human activities upon the environment led to action. Earth Ministry was founded by the Rev. Carla Pryne and Ruth and Jim Mulligan and was quickly supported by others from the Episcopal community. In 2008, the Episcopal Church held a national conference, Healing Our Planet Earth (HOPE), in

Seattle. Speakers included Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, a marine biologist, and Bishop Stephen Carlson, a Canadian indigenous Episcopalian. Episcopalians who attended HOPE joined together to revitalize the Bishop's Committee for the Environment of the Diocese of Olympia.

Since then, the BCE has worked to raise awareness of the climate crisis and of the connection between Creation Care and our baptismal promises. It supports diocesan churches with Green Grants as they work to reduce their carbon footprint. The Green Grant program has jump-started over \$390,000 of energy- or water-saving projects for diocesan church buildings and grounds.

The BCE educates Episcopalians and their congregations through workshops, shared resources, and retreats.

In 2011, Bishop Rickel sent J. B. Hoover and Nancy McConnell to Mindanao in the Philippines to explore a possible Creation Care partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Philippines. The Carbon Offset Partnership that resulted has led to the planting of more than 100,000 trees on Mindanao; the planting is supported by the donations of individuals and churches in the Diocese of Olympia that choose to offset their excess carbon emissions. And now the Carbon Offset Project has developed a science-based monitoring project that validates the actual offset from the tree plantings.

The work of the BCE has been carried out by volunteers from diocesan churches who met in person or via phone conference before the pandemic. The churches that participate are representative of the Diocese. They are small and large and from various regions.

Taking Action: The BCE should continue its work in the Diocese of Olympia but be retooled as follows:

- To work with and under the leadership of the recommended Canon for Creation Justice
- To develop an action agenda from the recommendations in this document with the approval of the Bishop of Olympia

- To use multimedia digital tools to connect with all diocesan churches and to celebrate the work of those churches
- To use multimedia digital tools to build a deeper relationship with the Diocese of Southern Philippines, our partner in the Carbon Offset Partnership
- To continue to insist that the Diocese of Olympia advocate for environmental justice
- To develop a meeting and membership structure that works for post-pandemic needs
- To continue to administer Green Grants
- To report on its work at Diocesan Convention
- To rename itself the Bishops Committee on Climate Justice

Other possible goals of the BCE relevant to the current worsening climate crisis follow:

- **Anticipate Impacts and Recommend Adaptations.** There could be annual or periodic briefings by the Committee to the diocese about the impacts of climate change on our congregations and communities and how to adapt to them. [More detail.](#)
- **Understand the Roots of Our Antipathy.** The Committee should seek the wisdom of long-term group leaders to determine what standards are most likely to support transformation. One example of this is the [Touchstones for the Circle of Trust.](#) [More detail.](#)
- **Define Paths to Kenosis.** Climate change calls us to move from desiring to have the world to being humbly within it. It frames many aspects of the climate justice. [More detail.](#)
- **Transform into Ecological Citizens of an Ecological Civilization.** [David Korten's recent white paper](#) addresses this issue but leaves many concepts open to be defined by the group. The Committee should study this and related works

to seek paths to an ecological self and an ecological state, society and civilization proper for our diocese. [More detail.](#)

- **Translate the Global into the Local.** The IPCC and the COP will increase in power over time so we must begin to study and understand the issues they are facing and become more active in deliberations. We are blessed with having two members of our diocese being active members of the National Congregation. We must translate into common knowledge what the Paris Accords are and how they affect us, what the present challenges are, and where help is needed.
- **Identify Sister Climate Congregations.** Climate change has not hit very hard here in the Pacific Northwest for many of us. In less developed countries it has hit very hard. Sister Climate Congregations are formed when one of our congregation's links with a congregation that has been subjected to significant climate harm. [More detail.](#)
- **The Practical Is Political.** We will not secure the political change we need without practical political actions. This Committee should keep track of the political actions considered nationally by groups such as Sunrise, 350.org, Interfaith Power and Light, ThirdAct.org, Greenfaith.org, FAN, and Earth Stewards and make recommendations as to which political actions seem to be the best fit.
- **Results:** Reorganizing the BCE means reinvigorating the efforts of a very effective lay-led committee. Attention to climate crisis is paramount, and, even if a Canon for Creation Justice is in place, she/he/they will require the guidance, reach, and collective impact of an advisory body.

Resources:

- [Healing Our Planet Earth: Stewardship of the Earth—The Episcopal Church](#), The Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, former Presiding Bishop.