

Diocese of Toronto

Policy Paper on Environmental Issues

Preamble/Background

In 2003-2004 the Social Justice and Advocacy Board, evolved from the Community Ministries Board, was asked to develop priorities for advocacy for the Diocesan Bishop and others as they interact with government officials and those who influence social realities in our Diocese. In January 2004, the Board gathered input from many across the Diocese, and, with the approval of Diocesan Council, identified Homelessness and Affordable Housing, as well as Child Poverty, as two priorities for both advocacy and parish outreach work. Over the ensuing decade and a half, we have come to see child poverty as only one aspect within the wider context of poverty and income inequality.

HIV/AIDS was also identified as a priority for outreach and advocacy at Diocesan Synod in 2005 and remained a social justice priority until 2015, when outreach in this area was subsumed under Chaplaincy. Environmental issues were added as another Diocesan social justice priority in 2010.

In January 2008 the Social Justice and Advocacy Board ceased to operate as a Canonical Board and became the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee. Currently the three priority areas for the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee remain:

- Homelessness and affordable housing
- Poverty reduction
- Environmental Issues.

As we embark upon a new chapter in the history of the Diocese of Toronto with the election and consecration of a new Coadjutor Bishop, I have been asked to prepare updated policy statements on these three priority areas. The Social Justice & Advocacy Committee and I look forward to working with our new Diocesan Bishop on these priorities and others that the Bishops and Diocesan Council may define.

Environmental Justice within the context of Scripture and the Church's Mission

As members of Christ's Church, we are called into Christ's mission to the world (Matthew 28:18-20.) The good news of God in Christ is described in our baptismal vows as well as in the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion.

In our baptismal vows, we promise to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving [our] neighbour as [ourselves]", to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being," and to "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and respect, renew, and sustain the life of the earth." (Book of Alternative Services, "Holy Baptism", p. 159, including the additional text added by resolution C001 of Joint Assembly 2013). These vows echo the third, fourth and fifth Marks of Mission: "to respond to human need with loving service", "to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to

challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation”, and “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.”

Echoing this call, the Mission of our Diocese is to “build healthy, missional Anglican communities that engage faithfully with the world and share the gospel of Jesus Christ.” A healthy community is one which understands the interconnection between its own health and the health of the wider community, including the non-human creation. A missional community does not occupy itself solely with its own internal well-being but focuses outward on behalf of those beyond its doors. And faithful engagement with the world involves understanding both God’s love and purpose for creation as well as God’s call to us to care for it.

God’s care for creation, and God’s call for humankind to participate in care for creation, is woven throughout Scripture. From Genesis onward, the Scriptures speak of God’s creation as very good (Gen. 1:31) and wondrously made (Job 38-41, Matthew 6:29). One of the first commandments given by God to humankind is to bear the image of God in caring and living in harmony with creation (Gen. 1:28, 2:15), although the relationship between humans and the earth, as that between humans and God, and that among humans themselves, is corrupted by sin (Gen. 3:15-19).

Yet God continues to retain sovereignty over the earth and covenants to protect and renew it (Gen 9:8-17; Leviticus 25:23-24; Ps. 24.1; Ps. 104:27-30). Moreover, both Old and New Testaments present us with a vision of human life – and indeed the life of all God’s creatures - as mutual and interdependent. The Torah sets out conditions under which all members of the community are enabled to flourish, including restrictions on the enrichment of a few at the expense of others, and measures to protect the fertility and integrity of the land and its creatures (Lev. 19:23-25, 25:1-6, Deut. 22: 6-7.) Paul describes the interdependence of the community in terms of an organic whole, the body (I Cor. 12:12-26), and holds up Christ as the one in whom all things are created, reconciled, and held together (Col. 1:15-20.) This biblical emphasis on the interrelationship of the created order is echoed in traditional Indigenous understandings that describe land, water, and plant and animal life as “all my relations.”

Finally, the redemptive work of Christ through his death and resurrection is extended through and beyond humanity to encompass the whole of creation (John 3:16-17, Romans 8:19-23, 2 Cor. 5:17, Colossians 1:15-20). The Biblical vision never considers humankind as separated from the rest of creation – whether in the original creation, in our life here on earth, or in the ultimate fulness of God’s kingdom.

Thus, living out our baptismal vows and engaging in the mission of the church necessarily involves a commitment to caring for the creation of which we are all a part, and to which we are all connected. Sadly, as a Church, we have largely lost this sense of connectedness and care for the wider creation. We are disconnected from each other and from the land and its creatures. The Rev. Dr. Stephen Drakeford, in his paper “World of Wonder: Contemporary Discipleship, Climate Crisis, and Anglicans,” calls for a “theological reset” that recovers our place in creation, our understanding of what it is to be made in the image of God, and realigns our consumption patterns and lifestyle choices in faithfulness to God, creation and our neighbour.

Environmental Issues within our Diocese and beyond

Because the environment knows no borders, human activity within our Diocese has an impact on people and places around the globe, and vice versa. Some of the key environmental issues which we both experience and contribute to in our Diocese include:

Climate change. Our climate is warming. Average global temperatures have already increased 1 degree Celsius over pre-industrial levels, bringing about melting glaciers and polar ice caps, rising seas, and more intense storms. This has resulted in more flooding of coastal areas and desertification inland, with crop failure and species loss. The most dramatic effects of climate change are being experienced near the equator and the poles. We see these effects in killing heatwaves in India and Australia, increasing desertification of agricultural areas in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, and rising sea levels flooding Pacific island nations. Meanwhile both North and South poles are experiencing significant loss of ice cover, which spurs even greater warming; wildlife native to these regions are finding it more difficult to find food, and the Indigenous peoples who depend upon permafrost for transportation and wildlife species for their survival are at increasing risk. As Christians we cannot shrug our shoulders as if the problems experienced by people in other parts of the world are none of our concern, for Christ calls us to extend our care to the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Indeed, in our work with PWRDF and the Council of the North we see firsthand the impacts of climate change on our fellow human beings around the globe.

Even in temperate regions such as southern Ontario, we are seeing the impact of climate change in the forms of more intense and destructive storms, increased wear and tear from more frequent freeze-thaw cycles, increased heat alerts in the summer, and the increase of vector-borne diseases such as West Nile Virus and Lyme disease, as their carriers become more active with warmer temperatures¹. Low-income people suffer most, as they have fewer resources to protect themselves or recover from a disaster, but the costs are borne by all of us. The July 2013 storm that caused flash flooding across the GTA resulted in \$850 million in property damages, making it the costliest natural disaster in provincial history.²

If we were able to maintain global temperatures at this level, it would be challenge enough. But we are on track for much more devastating impacts. In October of 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report warning that “Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5 C and increase further with 2 C.” Furthermore, the report cautions that “limiting global warming to 1.5 C ... require[s] rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure, and industrial systems... [and] can only be achieved if global CO2 emissions start to decline well before 2030.” This leaves us only eleven years to bring about the transitions we need. The time to act is now.

Plastic Pollution. Another growing concern is the proliferation of plastics. The same durability that makes plastics so convenient means that they are very difficult to break down completely, resulting in a buildup of plastic waste all over the world, and especially in the oceans. In Canada, only 11 percent of plastic is recycled, with the remaining 89% ending up in incinerators, landfills or in the environment³. An

¹ <https://trca.ca/conservation/climate-change/climate-change-impacts/>

² https://www.thestar.com/business/2013/08/14/july_flood_ontarios_most_costly_natural_disaster.html

³ <https://environmentaldefence.ca/canadas-plastic-pollution-problem/>

estimated 10,000 metric tons of plastic ends up in the Great Lakes every year.⁴ Wildlife can become trapped in or injured by plastic products or die from mistakenly ingesting them as food. Plastics can also leach harmful chemicals into soil and groundwater, from which they end up in the food chain and eventually the human body⁵. Globally, more than 320 million tons of plastics are produced each year, adding to the enormous problem of disposal.⁶

Water Protection. All creatures on earth need water to survive. We rely on the health of our lakes, rivers and groundwater aquifers to supply us with clean water for drinking, washing and irrigation. Our Diocese borders two of the five Great Lakes, which hold 20% of the world's fresh water and provide life and livelihood to more than 40 million people.⁷ Yet here in Ontario and elsewhere, these sources of life-giving water are at risk of contamination from industrial and agricultural activities. Groundwater aquifers can also be threatened by depletion from over-intensive agriculture or takings by water bottling companies.

Species at risk. In Genesis 9 God established a covenant with "every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." Yet human activity has caused increasing rates of habitat loss and species extinction, to the point where scientists are calling current extinction rates on a par with the five mass-extinction events of Earth's history⁸. Of those creatures that remain, populations are dropping rapidly: a 2018 report from the World Wildlife Federation found a 60% decrease in wildlife populations between 1970 and 2014.⁹ More than 200 plant and animal species are at risk in Ontario.¹⁰

Connection with Indigenous rights. Indigenous peoples, especially those relying directly on the land for traditional livelihood and sustenance, are especially vulnerable to environmental degradation. As part of our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, we must heed Indigenous voices calling for the protection of lands and waters and support their right to free, prior and informed consent to any activity affecting their territories, as set out in Article 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Fear, Hope and the Church

"Humanity, as a species grounded in nature, will, in this century, pass through the narrow corridor of its essence, and may not make it at all. The denialists, in assessing an apocalyptic scenario, suggest that its very apocalypticism rules it out. Ultimately, that is a preservation of the Judeo-Christian notion of the radical separateness of humanity from nature, the idea that we are immune to its system processes, or that our dominion over it can reverse on us."¹¹ - Guy Rundle, Australian journalist

⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025326X1630981X>

⁵ <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/plastic-planet-how-tiny-plastic-particles-are-polluting-our-soil>

⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/08/the-world-of-plastics-in-numbers>

⁷ <https://canadians.org/greatlakes>

⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/mass-extinction-humans-causing-earth-deaths-end-times-warning-a7765856.html>

⁹ https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/wwfintl_livingplanet_full.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-species-risk-are-listed> (Accessed February 15, 2019).

¹¹ <https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/02/14/environmental-catastrophe/>

The world is at a strange and awesome tipping point, what Christians since ancient times have termed a *kairos*. On the one hand, with only 12 years to transition to a zero emissions economy, the need for massive change could not be more urgent, as the IPCC report of October 2018 indicated. The planet appears to be doomed in three ways which all compound one another, according to the February 2019 Institute for Public Policy Research report, “This is a crisis: Facing up to the age of environmental breakdown”¹². Biodiversity is dropping precipitously, erosion of agricultural land has made feeding the world’s people less and less possible, and our social and political systems are wholly inadequate to resolve these problems. In this apocalyptic present, the church cannot preach the Good News of Christ while ignoring the imminent end of the planet as our habitat.

On the other hand, there are voices rising to end conventional thinking and align our present with a viable future, voices of defiance and courage. The weekly strikes by school children inspired by Swedish 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg have spread throughout Europe and are beginning to be seen in Canada. In the USA, the Green New Deal provides a political movement to shift their economy into the future, while in Canada, the Leap manifesto has called on all those seeking political office to seize the opportunity for transformation to a low-carbon, sustainable, and equitable future.¹³

The Diocese of Toronto has an opportunity to speak with a voice of faith in this dark time. We have an opportunity to model a theology that recognizes our connectedness with creation rather than a broken theology which assumes humanity can somehow stand apart from the rest of creation. We have an opportunity to open up discourse and create pathways for change and achievement. We have an opportunity to align ourselves with Indigenous peoples seeking to honour the land on which we must all find life.

What we are now called to do is unlike what we have worked on before. We are called to unstintingly and unhesitatingly change our priorities. We must assist our people to become environmental leaders in our communities. We must model the world ahead, the world in which consumption is minimized and relationships are nurtured, in which we stop burning carbon and spreading pesticides, in which we offer places for people to gather and organize structures of promise.

We do not know what this looks like, so we must raise up visionaries and leaders to help us rebuild our parishes and other institutions into networks of learning and rebuilding. None of our activities can continue without mindfully considering our opportunity to model the God’s commandment to care for creation.

What Anglicans have done to date:

Anglicans in our Diocese are already responding in a variety of ways to the call to care for creation, in practical greening, worship and education, as well as participation in advocacy.

Practical greening:

- Some parishes have taken extraordinary steps in moving toward green energy. St. Thomas, Brooklin installed geothermal heating as part of a renovation in 2008-2009. All Saints, Collingwood installed solar panels on its roof in 2012.

¹² <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/age-of-environmental-breakdown>

¹³ <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/>

- Other parishes have taken advantage of our partnership with Faith and the Common Good's Greening Sacred Spaces program to conduct building audits and energy-saving retrofits. St. Matthew, Islington, Holy Trinity, Thornhill, Epiphany and St. Mark, and St. Cuthbert, Leaside are four parishes which have worked extensively with Faith and the Common Good to improve their energy efficiency and lower their carbon footprint.
- All three points of the Parish of Minden-Kinmount (St. Paul, Minden, St. Peter, Maple Lake, and St. James, Kinmount) have installed interior acrylic storm windows over their stained-glass windows to minimize energy loss.
- Community gardening is a popular way for parishes to express care for creation while working to meet local needs for healthy food. 30% of parishes surveyed in 2018 either have a community garden on their own property or are part of a community garden in their neighbourhood.
- The Church of the Ascension, Port Perry has partnered with Kawartha Conservation in efforts to regenerate Williams Creek behind the church property. Professionals have removed invasive Japanese knotweed and reinforced the streambanks with boulders to reduce erosion, while volunteers, including some from the parish, will help replant the banks with native species to improve wildlife habitat.

Worship and education

- At Diocesan Synod in 2009, Archbishop Colin Johnson declared April 18, 2010 as Earth Sunday in the Diocese. Ever since, our Diocese has marked Earth Sunday on the nearest Sunday to Earth Day and has produced resources for parishes to encourage them to observe that occasion. Many parishes mark the day with sermons, hymns and prayers that focus on creation. Other Earth Sunday activities parishes have engaged in include:
 - Hiking and praying with youth and seniors (St. Peter, Erindale)
 - Lunch-and-learn presentations on reducing plastic use (Christ Church, Scarborough)
 - Presentations on pollinator-friendly gardening and donations of pollinator-friendly wildflower seeds (St. Martin-in-the-Fields)
- The "Green Team" at All Saints, Collingwood not only spearheaded the solar panel and community garden projects in their parish, but continue to offer regular environmental tips in the church bulletin and bring in speakers on environmental issues.
- Since 2011, the Rev. John Hill and Ms. Diane Marshall have offered a workshop on "Crafting the Prayers of the People in a Time of Climate Crisis". This workshop has been presented to numerous parish and deanery groups as well as at Diocesan synod in 2011.
- Diocesan Synod in 2011 was a "Green Synod" with a keynote address from Dr. Stephen Scharper, with nine breakout sessions on different aspects of creation care.
- St. Cuthbert, Leaside has been a leader in environmental worship and education for over a decade. From 2009 to 2013 the parish held a candlelight service, open to the neighbourhood, during Earth Hour in late March. In 2016-17 the parish hosted a series of films on environmental issues and followed it up with a spring Eco-Fair showcasing eco-friendly businesses and organizations and featuring panel discussions with local politicians.
- In January 2013, Holy Trinity, Trinity Square hosted the first annual Keepers of the Water Vigil. This has become a joint event in collaboration with Toronto Urban Native Ministry.

- Since the spring of 2017, St. James Cathedral has collaborated with Toronto Urban Native Ministry on the Niigaani-gichigami Water Festival, which aims to honour and protect the waters of Lake Ontario.
- In the fall of 2018 the Church of the Redeemer held a four-week series for the Season of Creation. Programming included special themed services, guest preachers, and panel discussions. Redeemer is planning another Season of Creation series for 2019.
- We are connected to environmental movements of the wider church: with other Dioceses through the national Creation Matters Working Group and through them to the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

Advocacy:

- Anglicans in our Diocese and beyond were active in advocacy against a proposed “mega-quarry” outside of Orangeville, ON in 2012. There were concerns that the quarry would not only destroy valuable farmland but disrupt the water table. The provincial government ordered an environmental assessment of the project in September 2012 and the company withdrew its proposal for the quarry in November, citing lack of community support.
- 20 Parishes in the Diocese supported a 2015 Vestry Motion 2015 calling for federal action to reduce carbon emissions while encouraging parishes to take their own steps to reduce their carbon footprint.
- In 2017, 64 parishes supported a Vestry Motion calling for the adoption and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and, in particular, for the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples to developments on their traditional territories. Having supported this Vestry Motion, many Anglicans in our Diocese have participated in postcard and message campaigns calling on MPPs and Senators to pass Bill C-262, a private member’s bill to adopt and implement the Declaration.
- A growing interest in responsible investment led to workshops on divestment at Outreach Conferences in . 2014 and 2015. Members of the Social Justice & Advocacy Committee spoke to the Diocesan Investment Committee in spring 2015 about divesting from fossil fuels, and in November 2015 Diocesan Synod passed a motion encouraging the Investment Committee to continue efforts toward divestment from fossil fuel industries. This motion, along with similar ones in other Dioceses, led to a resolution at General Synod in 2016 to create a national task force on responsible investment to guide the investment practices of General Synod funds.
- Beginning in 2017, Anglicans in our Diocese have participated in the Give it Up for the Earth Lenten postcard campaign from Citizens for Public Justice. Each year, nearly 300 Anglicans in over a dozen parishes have pledged to reduce their own carbon footprints while calling on the federal government to end subsidies for fossil fuel industry.
- Through the Social Justice & Advocacy newsletter and Facebook page, we have continued to make Anglicans in our Diocese aware of opportunities for public consultation and occasions for advocacy on environmental issues, and have provided resources on the Diocesan website to help in communicating with elected officials.

As much as has been done in our Diocese to advance care for creation by worship and education, in practical ways, and in advocacy, much of our progress to date has been piecemeal. Creation care is still all too often considered an “add-on” to the work of the church instead of an integral part of God’s call to

us. Nor does it respond to the urgency of the environmental situation facing us. In the next section we have identified ways to expand this work and weave it more deeply into the life of our Church.

Priorities for action and advocacy

Here are some of the things the Creation Matters Committee have identified as priorities as we move forward. Some are matters we can accomplish on our own. Others will need the collaboration of other departments of the Diocese.

Enhancing the work of Creation Matters in the Diocese

- Make the Creation Matters Committee (currently a subcommittee of the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee) a Bishop's Committee, answerable to the Diocesan Bishop.
- Build a network of "Green Anglicans" across the Diocese for sharing information, activities, and best practices. From this network, create volunteer congregational consultant teams to assist with building, ministry and theological issues related to creation care.
- Name and employ a Creation Matters champion for the Diocese who would articulate, facilitate and encourage best practices in contemporary discipleship by encouraging parishes and individuals to lean into a more integrated care for creation.
- Improve awareness and accessibility of resources for parishes to reduce their environmental footprint. One possibility would be to adopt a "Green Parish" accreditation program similar to that used in the Diocese of Niagara. Parishes would be encouraged to take on and maintain certain activities to reach a Bronze, Silver, or Gold accreditation.

Diocesan Policy

- Advocate for adoption of a creation care lens for all decisions taken at the Diocesan level, including decisions made on property, investment, event-planning, travel, and formation of clergy and lay leaders. For example:
 - Developing and implementing environmental criteria for all diocesan and parochial capital spending.
 - Seek third party funding and provide grants or loans to help parishes convert to zero emissions operations.
 - End all spending that increases our carbon footprint.
 - Developing and implementing policies on travel that minimize carbon emissions.
 - Seek third party funding and provide grants or loans to help clergy purchase zero emissions cars.
 - Encourage and highlight ministries accomplished using public or active transportation options.
 - Minimize air travel on national, provincial and diocesan business.
 - Developing guidelines for land use that maximizes our solidarity with Indigenous peoples and minimizes our destruction of animal habitat and agricultural production.
 - Developing modules for clergy formation on the connection between creation care and the Gospel.

- Promoting reduced consumption as a holy and blessed life, as our religious orders do. (The Diocese of Niagara has a co-sponsored a program called Living Better on Less that might be a model for lay people.)

Advocacy

- Develop and encourage ties with local environmental groups.
- Encourage and equip Anglicans in the Diocese to take part in advocacy for robust environmental policies at the municipal, provincial and federal level, given that policy measures have a far greater impact than individual lifestyle choices.
- Join in advocacy with other Dioceses in Canada and elsewhere, along with Indigenous Peoples. For example, several Episcopal Dioceses in the U.S. have joined First Nations in advocacy against pipelines that threaten water quality in the Great Lakes. Our Diocese could take a leading role in encouraging Canadian Anglicans to join together with them in solidarity and care for these waters, just as the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant historically brought Iroquois and Ojibwe peoples together to share and protect the lands and waters of the Great Lakes region.

These are significant changes that will cut across all of our diocesan and parochial activities. In adopting them, we have an opportunity to be an organization that brings people together to respond to the most urgent words of God in our world.

There is so much to do, and so little time to do it. Our church can make a real difference.



“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.” - Romans 8:19