

MINUTES: Task Force – Liaison Luncheon

February 26, 2005

The meeting was called to order by chair Eleanor DelBene and an opening prayer was offered. During the introductions attendees were asked to describe one thing they loved most about God's creation. Responses included: mountains, bees, flowers, dirt, nature's "thin places", Camp McDowell, the beach, a creek in tree cover, AL streams and rivers and the great "oneness" of nature.

The first item on the agenda was a discussion of the CD Powerpoint Presentation for the Province IV bishops' pastoral letter on the environment. Robyn Arnold shared some of the story of the creation and production of the presentation. Following this The Rev. Deacon Gerri Aston discussed the Study Guide, which she and Eleanor created to accompany the presentation. Gerri presented the final version of the Church Energy Audit, which had been handed out at Convention.

The next item of business was the status of the Task Force webpage. Rosine Hall informed us that the webpage was almost up and running and we could expect to be able to access it very soon. She mentioned the possibility of collecting links for energy, environment, theology and creation, as well as making the Energy Audit, Mission Statement/Prayer Card and Study Guide available for download. There was also the suggestion of a moderated mailing list to share information among the Task Force and liaisons.

Following the official business Roger Conville offered some very positive comments on the simplicity of the Energy Audit and recalled the economic benefits reaped by Camp McDowell from a simple policy of turning lights off. Rosine mentioned that AUM saved a million dollars from retrofit energy efficient fluorescent lighting.

The meeting continued with time for feedback from the liaisons. Bill Moss discussed the energy savings from preset thermostats and mentioned the unavailability of curbside recycling for most parishes. Mention was made of possibly developing a guide for practical environmental solutions for congregations. The discussion continued with the United Nations Millenium Development Goals to ensure environmental security. Eleanor reminded us that this is the U.N. Decade of Water. The Cahaba River has some of the richest species diversity in the country. The Rev. Kerry Holder discussed the importance of direct, hands on, experiential encounters with nature and Rosine talked about the importance of environmental education.

Eleanor brought the discussion around to a theme for next year's diocesan convention. The theme of our Watershed Address was submitted, as well as the possibility of providing materials around the theme to be used in the local congregation. This is the year to get to know our watershed.

Following this, we discussed the possibility of a Task Force-Liaison retreat at Camp McDowell. Suggested events included a tour of the Southeast through photos by Beth Maynor Young and workshops on pertinent topics. Having the Province IV environmental coordinator, Joyce Wilding attend the meeting was also suggested.

Returning to the topic of education material and opportunities for parishes we discussed the possibility of Sunday School Curriculum materials focused around environmental themes. Suggestions for possible activities were also made. These included: birding, a tour of native plants, observances of the Feast Day of St. Francis and Trinity Sunday, bug walks, parish gardens and columbariums and Earth Masses. The importance of sharing earth stories was also mentioned and in addition being aware of the fear and indifference among parishioners when attempting to implement positive environmental change.

Gerri Aston next addressed the question of recruiting liaisons from more parishes. The importance of direct contact and repeating the message was brought up. In addition the value of having something particular to invite people to was mentioned. Gerri stressed the necessity of convincing the clergy that having a liaison to the task force would be an advantage to the parish. It was suggested that parishes be approached with an eye toward having liaisons from each region, perhaps by dividing up the parish list by convocation.

The final discussion was about the relationship between liaison and Task Force. Ideally, the liaisons would let us know what the parishes need and the Task Force would provide resources and information for meeting those needs.

The meeting ended with a wonderful lunch of vegetable lasagna generously provided by the Church of the Nativity, Huntsville and beautifully prepared by Sally Stockton. The Task Force is grateful for the efforts of Sally and for the lovely flowers provided by Harold Warren, St. Andrew's Birmingham.