

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area Earth Care Congregations

Meeting of August 17, 2019

The House of Hope Presbyterian Church

Present: Rick Person (Westminster), Rev. Ashley Bair (Central), Jim Dunning (First Pres, Eau Claire), Tomie Evans (Cherokee Heights United Church), Julie Close (First Pres., S. St. Paul), John Crampton (Oak Grove), Elly Verhagen (House of Hope), Deb James (House of Hope), Manley Olson (Westminster), Judy Helgen (Mac Plymouth United Church)

The meeting was opened with a confessional prayer used at the recent PEC conference.

Review of The PEC Conference

The five around the table who attended the Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC) conference in Stony Point, NY offered reflections on their experiences.

Updates on Fall Activities

- **Westminster** will be hosting Paul Douglas at an evening forum on climate change, Tues, November 12 at 6:30PM in Westminster Hall. A forum on renewable energy and how churches can sign up is being planned for early 2020. Rocky Rockenstein who negotiated the Westminster solar contract will be speaking. May expand to include Oak Grove (PV on roof, purchasing community solar and Windsource). Manley reported that he spoke with Jeff Japinga, executive presbyter, about greater PTCA focus on climate change and earth care.
- **Central** – Efforts at Central are focusing on specific actions to combat climate change. Ashley attended the climate leadership conference at the Convention Center through Climate Reality Project. She has access to 10,000 slides that are updated monthly. Would like to find a way to share this resource. She also spoke with Jeff Japinga to request a session on climate justice at Presbytery. She and her congregation have been reconsidering their approach to environmental issues. For example, they want to be bolder about climate change, and put less energy into things like waste reduction. Central is eager to work with other congregations on climate change.
- **First Presbyterian Eau Claire** -- Jim Dunning reported that they are a new Earth Care Congregation. The City of Eau Claire passed a sustainability ordinance in 2018 committing to meet the standards laid out in the Paris Accord: carbon neutrality, 100% renewable energy by 2050. The county has done the same. Jim is working with a faith-based group called JONAH. There is much going on at the community level, but as a church they are just getting started.
- **Cherokee Park** – Tomie is working with Citizens Climate Lobby, Westminster's eco justice group and others promoting adoption of The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act - H.R.763. She traveled to Washington DC with CCL in June, which visited all 535 members of Congress. Cherokee Park has a new pastor, Rev. Matthias Peterson-Brandt. He is very interested in being involved in earth care efforts.
- **First Presbyterian South Saint Paul** -- Julie Close reported they are working on signing up for Windsource, and are considering solar. Working on organics recycling – currently they have to haul organics to a drop-off site. They are working on getting organics pick-up at the church.

- **Oak Grove** -- John Crampton reported that they are hosting their second annual EV Expo on September 14, 11am -3 pm. They will have EV owners at the event talking about their experiences with EVs. There will be talks in the sanctuary by experts to include a session on women's perspective. Facilities staff have been asked not to mow for a couple weeks as they will have mowers to try out. They are interested in helping other congregations do similar events. They are also moving on youth education – “KidWind ”-- for kids 4-9 to build model wind turbines. The program was used during vacation Bible school this summer. The program is importable for other churches, schools and environmental groups.
- **Macalester Plymouth** -- Judy Helgen reported they have been working on solar and Windsorce; moving toward being a carbon neutral church; they are hosting a speaker on 9/22 on solar.
- **The House of Hope** -- will be applying in January to become an Earth Care Congregation. Deb James asked the group about joining together to participate in the Climate Strike on Friday, September 20. It is intended to be a protest. People are asked to leave work and school, not do “business as usual” that day. Ashley recommends that we follow the youth leaders on this. She will get more information and share it with the group. Elly Verhagen recommended a book: Climate Church, Climate World by Jim Antal, with forward by Bill McKibben.

Report to Presbytery about earth care activities

The Presbytery sent out a request this week for congregations to share news of actions taken in the interest of earth care, possibly as the result of Ashley and Manley speaking with Jeff Japinga. They are interested in getting contact names at individual churches, as well as information on upcoming events. Rick will share the contact information for the ECC group, and add Jeff and the stated clerk to our email list. Individual congregations should also forward info on specific upcoming events to our group and to the Presbytery, e.g. the upcoming EV Expo.

Formation of subcommittees

The group had a lengthy discussion about climate change education and advocacy. Tomie would like to focus on the business community, specifically that each and every business needs to make better decisions. A central idea is to develop a target group of individuals who would each make one phone call/month to his/her elected representatives. An email would be sent out each month with key issues to call about. Another possibility would be organizing a Citizens Climate Lobby group.

Another idea is to organize an event through Presbytery that would introduce various approaches to tackling climate change – carbon dividend, divestiture, 100% renewables, fossil free, soil health, carbon sequestration, etc. We may want to partner with the 100% Campaign and 350.org, MN Environmental Partnership, Citizens Climate Lobby and/or other advocacy groups. Look at our own investments as well as the investments of our churches. We agreed that there is a need for a broad community doing this together, not just within our own congregations. Perhaps we can become a model of how churches working together can make a difference.

After a wide-ranging discussion, the group decided to form a subcommittee to start working on a program to reach “the 80%” -- people who are concerned about climate change but maybe don't know how to take action and get involved. Ashley, Rick, John, Tomie and Julie will meet to begin planning.

Rick Person closed the meeting with prayer.

Next meeting: At Central Presbyterian, Saturday, 11/9/19, 10AM