

**St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Green Committee**  
**Annual Report – July 2014 to June 2015**

**Members:** Ann Akey, Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, Ann Fillin, Rosemary Gill, Laisz Lam, Gerard McGuire, Susan Olsen, Sr. Ginny Pfluger, and Katia Reeves

**Membership:** We welcome new members to join us in this effort for the common good. Please contact Katia Reeves at [katia.reeves@sbcglobal.net](mailto:katia.reeves@sbcglobal.net)

**Accomplishments:** Listed in St. Francis Pledge action format

**Pray and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and advocate for the poor and vulnerable who are impacted by climate change.**

1. We begin our meetings with a prayer to God to bless our work and protect the Earth and all those in it.

**Learn about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.**

2. This past fall, joined representatives from 11 local congregations to form the Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action. This group supports its members in developing effective strategies to work on climate change issues.

3. Publish the Green Corner in bulletins with tips and information on environmental concerns.

**Assess how we as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations contribute to climate change by our energy use, consumption, waste, etc.**

4. Updated the electricity consumption for the OLR site for the year since the last assessment was made. It had gone up by 13 percent due to air conditioners at ISTP.

5. Calculated that 1,630 lbs. of CO2 emissions are released during the 6 cold months the boiler operates for heating the OLR Church for daily Mass. The boiler and pump had to run for a minimum of 4 to 5 hours starting at around 4:30am to heat the church.

6. Surveyed the daily Mass members to determine if, based on the CO2 emissions, they would be agreeable to move daily Mass to Dermody Chapel during the winter months. The result was 12 **for** and 11 **against**. Due to these discouraging results, the Green Committee withdrew the proposal in January.

**Act to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.**

7. Planned, prepared, and launched the Solar Initiative pledge drive to install the panels at the OLR site. Ted Baer generously lent us his expertise in the fund raising aspect. The goal was to raise \$49,665. With the tremendous assistance of many parishioners, more than 70 generous donors, and the hard work by Green Committee members, we were successful in raising the funds. The installation supplies 60% of the electricity used at the OLR / ISP site.

8. For the third year veggie burgers were served at the Parish Picnic. There is always a big demand for them. A committee member prepared a poster showing the environmental impact of beef production.

9. The new digital timer to control the boiler and pump at OLR was installed in June, 2015. We made this change after our proposal to move daily Mass to Dermody Chapel during cold weather was not accepted. We will determine the effectiveness to save energy when the cold weather arrives. Lowering the thermostat to the recommended 68 degrees F from the current 72F would also help.

10. Our solar installation took place from December 22 through December 31, 2014. This was the only time available when the ISTP school was not in session. The panels started producing solar energy the

afternoon of December 31. The installation came under budget and the rebate from the City was higher than we expected. The remainder funds (\$7,336) are being held for a potential future solar installation at SAG.

11. One of our Green Committee members sewed 26 Christmas gift-wrapping bags and donated them to the Christmas Fair to encourage parishioners to reduce throw-away wrapping for their gifts. These sold out quickly.

12. During Advent we collected 99 pairs of eye-glasses at all the sites. We turned these over to a parishioner Lions Club member for their eye missions throughout the world.

13. Three of the 8 remaining trees of the Tree Planting Plan were planted this spring to replace the many trees lost to pests around the OLR back parking lot. We hope to get the rest planted this coming season when the El Niño current brings us more rain.

14. Solar update: Determined that the utility bill savings due to the solar installation is tracking at \$6,000 per year. The OLR electricity bill for June and July were both \$0. The monitoring system tracks all the energy used by ISTEP, and they pay us for it at the going rate of 14 cents per kW-hr giving us a positive cash flow.

15. Graphed the water consumption at all our parish facilities for January 2012 through July 2015 and demonstrated our reduced water usage required by the drought. The graphs were published in the e-bulletin.

16. We reduced the carbon footprint from natural gas consumption at our parish facilities by 34% from 2009 through 2014. This results in cost savings. Published the graphs in the bulletins to show the gains to parishioners and encourage their continued support. Our parish facilities carbon dioxide emissions for 2014 reached 103.3 metric tons for the year. One metric ton = 2,205 lbs. There is still room to reduce the emissions. One example is to reduce the thermostats temperature settings to the recommended 68 deg F during cold weather.

17. Continue to implement the *Zero Waste is Possible* program by reducing plastic and eliminating styrofoam at parish events by using compostable utensils. Continue using the bins for recyclables, compostables, and landfill waste at all the sites.

**Advocate for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable**

18. Hosted Lauren Matusich to speak on *The Call to Ecological Conversion* on Spirituality Tuesday on April 21, 2015. Lauren Matusich is a member of the Religious Studies faculty at Archbishop Mitty High School and has taught a broad range of courses including Environmental Ethics, Personal and Social Ethics, Christian Spirituality, and Gospels and Morality.

Prepared by Katia Reeves