

# St Thomas Aquinas Parish Green Committee

Semi-annual Report July 2017 – April 2018

**Members:** Ann Akey, Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, Ann Fillin, Laisz Lam, Chloe Lemons, Walt Lundin, Kate Mouton and Larry Reeves, auxiliary member at the BEMCommittee.

**Membership:** We welcomed two new members and one auxiliary member.

**Mission Statement:** The Green Committee of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, on behalf of the parish community, works to advocate for Catholic principles and priorities in environmental issues and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable. The committee works to inspire the parish community to discern and act in ways that reflect our duty to care for God's Creation.

1. **Walt Lundin's eNewsletter:** Completed Volumes I and II with 100 postings each. Volume III reached 24 postings before it was suspended due to health reasons in November 2017. This was an informative current environmental news digest written in Walt's unique pithy style that went to more thirty-four recipients in our parish, the Diocese, PA Commons and other concerned citizens. We sincerely thank Walt for all the articles informing about the great challenges our Earth is facing.
2. We continue to implement the **Zero Waste Is Possible program** by reducing plastic and eliminating styrofoam at parish events by using compostable utensils. The recyclables, compostables, and landfill waste bins at all the sites are now the norm. We have re-emphasized the need to sort the waste in the correct bins as Palo Alto is now auditing the bins and issuing fines for non-compliance. As of January this year, China has implemented stricter rules for contaminants allowed in the recyclables from 5% to less than 0.4%. They do not accept shipments that do not meet this level. Worked with the BEMC (Building and Equipment Maintenance Committee) and the OLR Site Committee on communicating the parish policy to users of our hospitality halls that if fines result from incorrect sorting, the users will need to reimburse the parish.
3. We held the annual and popular **free-cycle** event at the parish picnic. This fits the "re-use" side of the "reduce, re-use, recycle" triangle.
4. We continue supporting **veggie burgers** at the parish picnic with a poster showing the environmental impacts of meat.
5. Was interviewed in Spanish for the official radio show of the Archdiocese of Washington DC for broadcast in Radio America which has more than 50 radio stations around the continent. This was a telephone interview in October 2017 about our parish Green Committee's actions in support of Laudato Si, our solar panels, energy reductions, landfill waste reduction through composting and recycling, etc.
6. **Solar panels savings to date:** The OLR and SAG solar panels have saved the parish \$30,581 to date. The OLR panels have been operational for 38 months yielding \$18,153 savings and the SAG panels have been working for 25 months resulting in \$12,428 in savings.
7. Our auxiliary member inventoried the parish refrigerators and made recommendations for removing the oldest, least energy efficient ones. So far, the 43 year-old refrigerator from the Pastoral Center has been replaced resulting in an expected \$200 annual savings in electricity.

8. Continue working with **Catholic Climate Covenant** (CCC) in support of different advocacy initiatives such as gathering signatures to oppose the EPA's proposal to repeal the Clean Power Plan. We have also participated in various webinars they have sponsored.

9. Additionally, collected signatures through the e-bulletin Green Corner and 12 interfaith congregations in support of the national, bipartisan bill the **American Innovation and Manufacturing Act (S. 2448)** to ban hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). This was another initiative from CCC. According to the book *Drawdown*, mentioned above, managing HFC's is the number one solution to reduce greenhouse gasses emissions to the atmosphere.

**On March 23, 2018, the California Air Resources Board banned HFCs from being used in the state.** Many manufacturers are already using other alternatives that don't trap heat in the atmosphere.

9. One of our new members, Chloe Lemons submitted an article to The Valley Catholic: "**Reducing Food Waste to Grow in our Appreciation of God's Works**".

Reducing food waste is ranked as the #3 solution out of the 100 listed in the book *Drawdown* edited by Paul Hawken. This is an action within everyone's reach that can make a big difference.

10. We are preparing to screen the Al Gore film "**The Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power**" for **Spirituality Tuesday on April 17.**

Katia Reeves