



Green Committee (Established Sep 2009)

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.

Members: Ann Akey, Elizabeth Fitting, Gerard McGuire, Katia Reeves, Laisz Lam, Laura Chiu, Mary Ann Ho, Paul Chestnut, Rosemary Gill, Walt Lundin.

During 2009, the Diocese of San Jose joined the National Catholic Coalition on Climate Change and started the Catholic Green Initiative of Santa Clara County. The HCC, along with other ministries in the parish, took on the green agenda of the Diocese. In September, the Parish Green Committee was launched to lend greater weight to this initiative. We have a strong, active team with diverse strengths, talents, and interests. We drafted our Mission Statement, have developed and maintain a website with pertinent information. We meet on the 4th Monday of each month, at the residences of various members, enjoying homemade treats, herbal teas and organic fair trade coffee.



Accomplishments (Sept 2009 - July 2010):

1. Organized the parish-wide taking of the St. Francis' Pledge to Pray, Learn, Assess, Act, and Advocate Catholic principles dealing with climate change issues. We collected 534 pledges at the October 10 Masses.
2. Sounded the church bell at St. Thomas Aquinas, participating in the city-wide and world-wide 350 event to draw attention to the Copenhagen meeting of world leaders to address climate change policies.
3. Distributed close to 1000 reusable Green Bags from the Diocese of San Jose for the Thanksgiving Food Drive and parishioner use.
4. Showed the film "The Awakening Universe" to an audience of about 50, followed by a group discussion and sharing of ideas among parishioners. Two people joined our committee that night.
5. Publish weekly Green Corner information on paper and e-bulletins.
6. Instituted the weekly Sunday Mass environmental general intercessions.
7. Instituted the use of compostable or re-usable utensils at the parish social events, advocating the elimination of foam and plastic products.
8. Use biodegradable bags for food distribution through St. Vincent de Paul ministry.

It isn't important in which sea or lake you observe a slick of pollution, or in the forests of which country a fire breaks out, or on which continent a hurricane arises. You are standing guard over the whole of our Earth.

~ Uri Artyukhin, astronaut, USSR

9. Improved recycling and are actively reducing the amount of trash produced at parish events which is good for the planet and good for the budget as Palo Alto is charging more for trash pick up.
10. In partnership with the Finance and the Building & Maintenance Committees, we have calculated the parish carbon footprint, have a target to reduce it by 5% in 2010, and are actively working at reducing our energy use.
11. Produced and distributed the STA Thermostat Procedure to the facilities users, in hope of reducing heating costs.

12. Have confirmed that the paper bulletin uses recycled paper and soy based inks.

13. Held the parish-wide Bike-to-Mass weekend and rewarded the participants with free-trade chocolate. All church sites participated in this Earth Day event.



14. Relocated (or in process of relocating) bike racks so that all sites have adequate bike parking available for parishioners.

15. Published the Lenten Carbon Reduction bulletin insert with tips and guidelines for parishioners.

16. Participate in diocese-wide Liaison Committee and events.

17. Tapping into other environmental groups such as Interfaith Power and Light, Acterra, World Centric, Food & Water Watch, etc.

18. Participated in RCIA's information meeting for the newest Catholics, inviting them to join the Green Committee.



☞ The bell-ringing event took place on October 24 at 11 am. A group of parishioners were at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, posing for a picture in front of the "350" poster, made up of the St. Francis' Pledges signed by parishioners. (Clockwise from left: Fr. George, Nora, Walt, Stephanie and Chris Lundin, Gerard McGuire, Paul Chestnut, Ruth Chippendale, Laura Chiu)

☞ Several participants took turns ringing the Church bell for > 35 times, including Fr. George and Chris Lundin.

