

Annual Report for 2025 The Creation Care Committee (CCC)

Acknowledgements: The Creation Care Committee wishes to extend our gratitude for the leadership of Bishop Stevenson, Canon Heidi Kim, and Canon Ricardo Sheppard as the CCC works to faithfully carry out its mission in the Diocese of Virginia. We continue to try to love Jesus, embody justice, and be disciples in our work.

Mission Statement: At our annual retreat, we adopted this as our committee's Mission Statement: "The Creation Care Committee of the Diocese of Virginia encourages, empowers, and educates the people of the diocese to reconnect Christian discipleship and mission with the ecology of nature."

Structure of the CCC: The CCC as a whole is comprised of 20 to 30 active members from across the Diocese. In 2025 we also created a Board structure that includes the Chair, a Vice Chair, Leads for each of our current Working Groups, a Treasurer, a Recording Secretary, and a Lead for Communications.

Leadership Changes: Earlier in 2025, Carlo Uchello assumed the role of Chair for the CCC, and Kathy Ellis (the previous Acting Chair) is serving as the Vice Chair. Other Board members include Treasurer (Carlo Uchello - acting until someone else volunteers), Recording Secretary (Libby Witt), Communications (Alisa Booze Troetschel), Habitat Restoration Working Group Lead (Elaine Sevy), and Spiritual Resilience Working Group Lead (Kathryn Thomas). As additional Working Groups are formed, their leads will also become Board members. We have considered forming an Energy Efficiency Working Group, and we will do so when we have sensed that there is enough interest in doing so.

The CCC holds meetings on the third Thursday of each month, and each Working Group schedules and conducts meetings on their own. We use the Diocese's Basecamp to store meeting agendas and minutes as well as other pertinent information. Our Communications Lead publishes a monthly newsletter entitled "And it was good..." which is distributed to all committee members as well as our entire mailing list.

Activities and Events: Some of the CCC activities are conducted at the Committee level, whereas others are led by the individual Working Groups. Following is a listing of activities and events at the Committee level, followed by Working Group ones.

Networking Inside and Outside the Diocese of Virginia

We continually update a mailing list for parishes and parishioners within the Diocese of Virginia who have expressed an interest in our work or attended one of our in-person or virtual events. We are seeking to broaden awareness of the work we do throughout the Diocese. Many parishes have groups of parishioners who participate in one or more activities that fall under the rubric of Creation Care, such as Food Gardens or other ecological work that in support of our mission. We will continue to reach out through in-person and virtual events as well as emails to publicize the work that we do. In addition to building connections within the Diocese, the CCC is also seeking to establish a working relationship with the equivalent committees in other locations. One CCC member attended the recent "Soil to Soul" conference in London, Ohio, which was provided by Provinces IV & V. In addition to learning more about the work that other Diocese are doing, this event helped us establish a presence and personal relationships on a larger scale.

Shrine Mont Nature and Book Project

Shrine Mont is a logical outreach for the CCC. Our Committee's fiber art (known as a nuno, depicted here) has been at Summer Camps in 2024 and 2025, and will be displayed at the Ministry Fair at Annual Convention (as well as other events throughout the year).

We are putting into place the Shrine Mont Nature Project which will include books on the spirituality of creation. We have begun to work with Shrine Mont staff to increase nature programming during one of the summer camps with supplies provided by the CCC.

The Spiritual Resilience Working Group (SRWG): Many people feel overwhelmed by the enormity of our environmental challenges. This is a place where the Church is called to be present. Worship and prayer are pathways for celebrating God's creation. They are also vehicles for lament, confession, supplication, healing and hope. The SRWG working group is dedicated to developing ministry responses to this experience and engaging Episcopalians in a conversation around it.



The SRWG Working Group seeks to offer opportunities to seminarians, clergy, and lay people to learn about creation care and climate change; provide support as they initiate discussion in their parishes; encourage each parish to provide opportunities for celebration of God's gift of creation; encourage each parish to provide ways for parishioners to recognize emotions in the face of climate crisis, to offer channels for lament and expression of loss and grief; and encourage each parish to evaluate its level of preparedness for a climate event and to establish a Resilience/Rapid Response Ministry.

The SRWG offered a Lenten weekly virtual book journey of *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages* with commentary by Joan Chittister, OSB, which had 17 attendees. This met for 6 weeks and allowed for people from around DOVA to study together, discuss, and form relationships. Additionally, the SRWG hosted a Season of Creation virtual book journey of *The Body of God* by Sallie McFague. The Rev. Derrick Weston, Creation Justice Ministries, led the 4-part discussion of this book for 25 attendees.

We offered well-attended webinars as well, including one in December 2024 where Bishop Mark Stevenson presented his "Reflections on Hurricane Katrina" and we had over 50 attendees. In April 2025, The Rev. Dr. Caroline Mitchel presented "Spiritual Resilience in Time of Disaster" where we had 34 attendees.

The Habitat Restoration Working Group (HRWG): Members presented practical topics such as applying for a grant from the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, dealing with problems caused by excessive deer browse, etc. In July, the HRWG organized a webinar given by Payton Hoegh from the group Spirituality in Nature Group (SING) entitled "A Spiritual Call: Creation Care's Essential Role in the Life of the Community"

Working with Young People

Young people will be inheriting a world that will be different in many ways from the world of their parents and grandparents. We are in preliminary discussions to determine whether there is an event that we might sponsor to reach out to the youth of the Diocese. Our goal is not merely to engage superficially with the youth of the Diocese but to give them opportunities to help design, participate in, and even lead some activities in 2026.