

## **EARTH CARE ACTIVITIES 2016 & 2017**

### **Earth care Activities 2016**

#### ***WORSHIP***

This year Roy gave our Annual Earth Day sermon on April 24. The week before he asked members to list animals they would miss if they became extinct. Roy created a slide show movie with photos of these animals. We also had the opportunity to share on our blackboard in answer to the question: How do you express gratitude for God's Creation?

The Pentecost Sermon focused on our responsibility for creation: "The Holy Spirit is described in the Nicene Creed as the 'giver of life.' If the Holy Spirit is "poured out" on all created beings, the giver of life (fons vitae) is present in everything that is alive. Everything that lives manifests the presence of this divine wellspring. Experience of the life-giving Spirit, in the faith of the heart and the sociality of love, leads beyond the limits of the church to the rediscovery of the same Spirit in nature, in plants, in animals, and in the ecosystems of the earth. To experience the fellowship of the Spirit inevitably carries Christianity beyond itself into the greater fellowship of all God's creatures. For the community of creation, in which all created things exist with one another and in one another is also the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Both experiences of the Spirit bring the church into solidarity with the cosmos, which is mortally threatened. Faced with the "end of nature", the churches will either discover the cosmic significance of the Christ and the Spirit, or they will bear the guilt for the annihilation of God's earthly creation. Discovery of the cosmic breadth of God's Spirit leads to respect for the dignity of all created things, in which God is present through the Spirit."

Our hymns for Trinity Sunday centered on creation.

#### ***EDUCATION***

During Memorial Day Weekend, youth, pastors, and other adult volunteers hiked a portion of the Appalachian Trail and our summer one room school for children ages 5 to third grade used a curriculum that highlighted God's work in creation.



### ***FACILITIES***

Our Property Ministry is working on changing over our lighting to all LED. We had an audit in the Fall, but its needs to be redone, since it overestimated our current usage, so we don't have an accurate handle on cost/benefit, however we think savings will be substantial and worth some initial outlay of funds. We are maintaining vigilance with regard to the landscaper's use of pesticides and organic fertilizers; it is a continuing battle. We will make an effort to reduce the use of paper for classes and meetings and do better with re-cycling what we do use.

As the weather warmed we had a Butterfly Garden Work Day on May 24. Our butterfly garden has thrived and bloomed beautifully. We had many insect visitors to the garden, including Monarch butterflies!





### ***OUTREACH***

SMPC hosted the Bloom Art Show over the spring and summer months, continuing long after the initial dedicated period. This art show, sponsored by our partner in mission Cornerstone Montgomery, supports artists with mental illnesses and focused on nature and God's beauty. [http://www.saintmarkpresby.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/cornerstone\\_bloomflyerPDF-4.pdf](http://www.saintmarkpresby.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/cornerstone_bloomflyerPDF-4.pdf)

Our now annual Alternate Transportation Sunday was May 8. Members walked, carpooled, or took public transportation to church. Some of us were encouraged to keep walking over the warm months.

### **VISIONING FOR 2017**

Worship – We will continue our emphasis on the importance of our place in God's world, our responsibility for changing our practices, and our leadership in bringing others to activism. The greatest joy however, is the way the importance of creation care has been embraced by the pastors and congregation such that our hymns and prayers now consistently contain references to our propensity for earthly destruction and our responsibility for earth's renewal.

Education – Vacation Bible School will have an emphasis on recycling and sustainability. Our adult classes are now focused on a year of studying the

lectionary. Where appropriate references to and creation care and appropriate actions will be included.

Facilities – We are planning to take our Education Building all LED in 2017 with sufficient resources to accomplish it.

Outreach – I am in discussion with the Session about increasing sustainability requirements for building rentals.

### **Earth care Activities 2017**

We are so fortunate that our pastors are leading Saint Mark to take environmental stewardship seriously. They have embraced the importance of creation care as illustrated by the choices for our hymns and prayers, which now consistently contain references to our propensity for earthly destruction and our responsibility for earth's renewal. Our use of the screen in worship reduces the need for and use of paper bulletins each Sunday. This helps our continuing effort to eliminate paper and ease wear and tear on the copier and reduce use of chemicals in copying. We also seek to reduce paper usage for classes and meetings and to do better with re-cycling what we do use.

This year Roy gave the annual Earth Day sermon on April 23. He created a slide show of endangered aspects of our Earth to accompany the sermon. We also had the opportunity to share on our blackboard in answer to the question: How do you express gratitude for God's Creation?

Members walked, carpooled, or took public transportation to church on the annual Alternate Transportation Sunday, May 7. Some of us were encouraged to keep walking over the warm months.

This was the third season for Saint Mark's Butterfly Garden, located on the upper parking lot side near the kitchen at the back of the Church. Today, the garden contains a variety of perennial plants that are important host and nectar sources for butterflies and their caterpillars. The garden contains 18 different kinds of plants, in various stages of health and vigor. Our Butterfly Garden Work Day was on April 15. We continue to monitor the contracted landscapers to maintain vigilance with regard to the use of pesticides and organic fertilizers.

September 24, we showed the Oscar-nominated documentary film, "Chasing Coral." Our special guest for the event was the Chief Scientific Advisor on "Chasing Coral," Dr. Mark Eakin, who is an Elder and member of Warner Memorial Presbyterian in Kensington. He also is chair of National Capital Presbytery (NCP) Mission Coordinating Committee and a leader in NCP's Earth Care Congregations Network. We were privileged to ask him questions about the filming, since he is the Coordinator of NOAA's Coral Reef Watch, an effort focused on monitoring environmental conditions that lead to coral bleaching.

Our Property Ministry worked diligently on changing over our lighting to all LED in the fall. After finally obtaining approval from PEPCO for Small Business designation earlier in the summer, they proceeded with an agreement with Clear Insight to replace essentially all of the fluorescent lights in the Education/Office building, as well as the exterior lighting with LED bulbs, including replacement of the actual fixtures in many cases. The result of obtaining a waiver for qualification from PEPCO for the maximum rebate of 80%, as well as using the \$2,000 grant we received from the National Capital Presbytery Earth Care "Power to Change" program, reduced the cost of the project from approximately \$29,000 to \$4400, payable to Pepco on our monthly bill at 0% interest over 24 months. The expected energy savings will be approximately \$4500 a year, so we will have the project costs equaled out after only about one year; after that, we would reap great savings in our energy use at the church!

At Saint Mark we believe in Everyday Stewardship. Stewardship is about making choices and what we do every day of our lives. It is more than giving money to the church. Therefore, the work we do as individuals and as a church to save God's creation, our Earth, is stewardship of the environment.