

Consortium of North Shore Environmental Groups Meeting Notes January 12, 2016

Engaging Faith Communities

(The next CONSEG meeting will be on March 8, 2016. The topic will be “Building Effective Community Groups.”)

Introduction

Rev. Brian Sauder, President & Executive Director of Faith in Place

<http://www.faithinplace.org/>

- Their mission is to inspire people of diverse faiths to lead in caring for our common home: our shared land, water and air.
- Theme of solidarity. For him it means: “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”
- History of environmental justice in the faith community starting in 1982 when black churchwomen in Warren County, North Carolina, laid their bodies on the road to prevent dump trucks filled with soil contaminated with highly toxic PCBs from entering their town.
- 1991: First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit convened in D.C. with more than 300 environmental groups agreeing that, “If this nation is to achieve environmental justice, the environment in urban ghettos, barrios, reservations, and rural poverty pockets must be given the same protection as that provided to the suburbs.”
- Faith in Place this past August hosted The Green the Church National Summit, with programming specifically for the black church by the black church with a total attendance of 1,000 from around the country. Over and over it was emphasized: the same systemic violence that causes income inequality, racism, mass incarceration, lack of income and living jobs, is the same mentality of violence seen in the ravaging of Earth.
- Their programming helps not just the people they are working with, but the communities around them:
 1. Energy & Climate Change programs: reducing energy use and installing renewable energy
 2. Sustainable Food & Land Use programs: gardening, removing invasive species in the forest preserves, hosting winter farmers markets
 3. Water Preservation programs: education and retrofits to prevent basement flooding and sewer backups
 4. Advocacy Programs: training each other on how to lobby and navigate the halls of our State Capital
- Questions and Comments:
 - M. Fisher Park Ridge: She belongs to a ministry association that meets once a month, does Faith in Place have a program where they present

information about their organization at one of their meetings? Yes, they have one hour events about what Faith in Place does and how they can get involved.

- Green Teams are the organizing model at Faith in Place. The messenger matters, which is why they hire locally within the community and within the religious group. A Green Team is 4 or 5 people who are dedicated to greening their house of worship with the assistance of Faith in Place.
<http://www.faithinplace.org/our-programs/active-green-team>

Teaching & Community Gardens

Am Shalom Synagogue, creator of Glencoe Community Garden [GCG]: Nina Schroeder, Jim Goodman, Sheila Newman, and Vivian Nitzberg
<http://www.glencoecommunitygarden.com/>

- They give away 100% of what they grow.
- The GCG is a gift to the community by Am Shalom in celebration of the Synagogue's 40th anniversary as a way to serve humanity for social action.
- They set to create a community-wide social services project for people of all ages and abilities, sustainable, aesthetically appealing, educational, focused on improving our environment, help the community and the entire world.
- They decided to help those in need by providing fresh, organic vegetables and herbs for those who do not have access or could not afford buy
- Serves as a demonstration garden to show people what we can do.
- Zero waste through composting, solar power, rain barrel and drip irrigation.
- They have donated 10,000 pounds of produce in the 4 years they've been running.
- The garden is a partnership. The land was donated by the Village and Park District, and is an area by the train tracks where snow was previously dumped.
- Their challenges were how to prepare land, provide raised beds, identify water source, and make it safe.
- They received a start-up budget from the synagogue, land was given by the Village, and they secured pro-bono legal services, reduced pricing to auger for placement of water, compost for planting.
- Since beginning, they have doubled their size and have over 9k square feet and a greenhouse.

Glenview New Church: Roxanne Junge

- In 2007 as Director of the Church's preschool, she noticed that the kids were eating poor quality food with much packaging, and that students had no idea where their food came from. In response, she started a school garden.
- "History has shown us that the children who have come through that garden know where their food comes from and want to eat vegetables. They don't learn much from worksheets about this. They learn from getting their hands dirty. They then are teaching their parents."
- Additionally, they created an after school garden club to get parents involved, too.

Attendance declined as people started their own gardens.

- “You Pick” program allows people from the community to pick food – for each bag they pick, they also pick a bag to donate to the local food pantry.
- She advises to not be discouraged if you don’t know a lot about gardening.

Solar Installations

St. Elizabeth’s Church (Glencoe), Rev. Daphne Cody

<http://www.steglencoe.org/outreach/st-elisabeths-solar-panels/>

- In 2009, they needed a new roof on the 100 year old church and wanted to install solar panels. However, some members were horrified because they thought it would make the church ugly. As it turned out, the roof was not fit for solar panels.
- However, that did not stop them from wanting to be more environmentally friendly. “How can we take better care of G-d’s creation?” They started using re-usable dishware, CFL lightbulbs, and conducted an energy audit.
- They found that 30 solar panels would fit nicely on a flat portion of the roof that isn’t visible from the street. Solar Service (Lisa Albrecht) helped them obtain a state grant and they did community fundraising for \$20k from ten church members. It has been a success ever since.
- To view how much energy the solar panels are producing, go to:
https://enlighten.enphaseenergy.com/pv/public_systems/SW8690491/overview

Sts. Peter & Paul Greek Orthodox Church and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church (Glenview): George Nassos and Robert Castagna

- People who don’t help the environment are committing a sin.
- The two churches want to do a joint community solar project. They are waiting to hear about whether they were chosen for a grant from Cook County.
- Their plan is to have a pilot program to serve their respective churches, and hopefully develop a community solar program in Glenview.

Shir Hadash Reconstructionist Synagogue (Wheeling): Terry Black, Client Liaison for Windfree <http://www.shir-hadash.org/solar-savings/>

- Windfree Solar does a lot of work with non-profits
- They help you find grants, rebates to assist with paying for the work.
- This project was 360-325 watt solar panels, and will offset about 25% of their electric use. The building is full electric, not gas. They had a flat roof with a 117,000 watt solar system.
- Addendum from Synagogue’s website: “We are excited to announce that Shir Hadash Synagogue has installed a 120,000 watt solar system on the roof of our building. The system will save us more than \$15,000 per year in energy costs, and will pay for itself in nine years. One of Shir Hadash’s core values, Tikkun Olam, centers on healing the world and the environment around us. Over the life span of the project, the energy saved is the equivalent of planting 108,976 trees or

reducing automobile miles by 4,953,455 miles. The project cost \$435,000. Shir Hadash was awarded a grant of \$234,000 to help fund this project. We are trying to raise funds to cover the balance of the cost of the solar panels. We are planning to hang a commemorative solar panel in the synagogue with plaques to recognize donations to the project.”

Energy Efficiency and Waste Reduction

Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation (Northfield), Becky Brodsky

- She became involved because she wanted her kids to learn more about environmental issues at Jewish school.
- They started working on waste reduction by having kids decorate recycling bins.
- They made a big effort to connect it to religion, as a big value of Judaism is caring for the environment. There are many expressions in Hebrew about this, “we are partner with G-d to help care for his creation.”
- They also have added commercial composting at the Synagogue.
- She would like to see adults get more involved and form a Green Team.
- There is a garden that the Cantor works on, but it is not a community garden yet.
- Additionally, there is more opportunity to get children involved by having their Bar/bat-mitzvah projects be about the environment.

Community Church of Wilmette, David Van Brackle

- In the two years David has been at the Church, there have been ongoing conversations about making the building more energy efficient. Before he arrived, they replaced an old boiler with a high efficiency one and were impressed by the monetary savings.
- By the time he came to the Church their bulbs were all CFL and LED. The long term plan is to move over to LED lighting and add solar power.

Engaging Youth

Kenilworth Union Church, Youth minister Kate Lancaster

<http://www.kuc.org/uncategorized/confirmation-wilderness-program/>

- They do not have a Green Team, but do a number of things that relate to the earth including a wilderness trip for the confirmation program. She said the “earth is a co-teacher” for this program.
- She wants to incorporate pollinator gardens into the work she does with the Church as that is a passion of hers.

Establishing Interfaith Sustainability Groups

Lake County Green Congregations, Katey Aynilian

<http://www.umcl.org/green-team>

- She had been working as a team member at her Church, getting recycle bins in the building and keeping environmental issues in the forefront. The Sunday bulletin had a regular tip about what you can do to help the earth, which was very well received. They decreased the amount of paper used in the church office, increased electronic newsletter distribution, and hosted recycling events (shoes, Styrofoam).
- She wanted to have a bigger impact, so opened up the yellow pages and started calling and asking who was involved in environmental work at each church.
- The first meeting of Lake County Green Congregations was in June, 2009. They voted to continue meeting regularly and doing an annual joint earth day event. Meetings are monthly on the first Tuesday from 7-9 pm. They have 12 members representing 8 different faith denominations.
- They will be hosting the 6th Annual Green Living Fair on Saturday, March 12th with 35 exhibitors. This year they asked the exhibitors to update their presentations and think about the theme of choices in food and reducing our *foodprint*. 450 individuals were in attendance last year and attendance is free or by donation.
- They are trying to work with the College of Lake County to show the movie Merchants of Doubt in April.

Evanston Inter-religious Sustainability Circle, Jerry Herst

<https://www.facebook.com/EvanstonInterreligiousSustainabilityCircle>

- As a group, they come together monthly, report on what they're doing, and give support and assistance. The circle also supports Citizens Greener Evanston's Earth Month program and twice a year they have habitat restoration days.
- Addendum: "The Evanston Interreligious Sustainability Circle was founded in 1999 by members of diverse religious congregations as an expression of their Care of Creation, with a commitment to make Evanston a more sustainable place. The Circle has sparked the formation of seven other sustainability groups. The Circle meets monthly on the second Sunday from 3-5 at the Friends Meeting House, 1010 Greenleaf. The Circle supports the greening of individual congregations and sponsors various community-wide events."

Winnetka Interfaith Council, Dilnaz Waraich

<http://www.winnetkainterfaith.org/>

- The Winnetka Interfaith Council consists of Muslims, Bahai, Jewish, and Christian organizations.
- Sunday, April 17th program, Finding Inner Peace, Winnetka Presbyterian Church from 3:30 – 5:30.

Q & A / Comments

- In regard to grants available to the non-profits, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation has changed what it's going to fund. The DCEO funds

are frozen. The legislator has passed the renewal of that program but it needs to be signed by the Governor. ICECF is funding energy efficiency. ComEd has programs. There is funding for installation and retrofitting.

- Bike to Worship is a fun event Glenview does.
- Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation of Evanston offers tours.
- Is there any money for landscaping for religious organizations? There is with storm water management funds for wetland reclamation work. There are grants from various storm water commissions including Lake County, so by changing the landscaping it can reduce storm water runoff. Section 319 grants.
- Parking lots that are unused could be redone with permeable pavement.

Community Group Updates

- Northbrook: They have had a couple of meetings on GMOs, which have been very popular. They want start a program where they are going to interview grocery stores and restaurants to find out what they're doing.
- Citizens Greener Evanston: Certifying Evanston as a habitat for pollinators. They are working to create butterfly corridors between communities and a sustainable Evanston for everyone.
- Glenview: They are having an art contest to celebrate nature. To apply visit the art league website. Applications are due the first week of February.
- Highland Park: Movie at the library on January 23rd at 1 PM. They are starting to work on ordinances enforcing no-idling. Additionally, they are going to have a recycling event with hard to recycle items.
- Northfield: They are trying to start a Go Green Northfield. If you know anyone interested, let us know!
- Park Ridge: Three of their Go Green members are going to be serving on the Village Health Commission. Their lawn care program will be meeting with schools.
- Prospect Heights (NEW): They are part of the Natural Resource Commission, so they work with and answer to city. John McCabe from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County will be giving a talk on urban prairie burning on January 26th at the Notebaert Nature Museum. In April, there will be a talk on butterflies.
- Winnetka: Looking for more members, let us know if you know anyone to reach out to!
- Wilmette: They're hosting a Green Tea on the *Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. They are also planning Going Green Matters, which will take place on March 13, 2016 at the Michigan Shores Club on the topic of Sustainable Suburbs.
- Glencoe: The Park District just finished their program for strategic direction for the next year including a green strategic plan.

Addendum: Coal Tar-Free Suggestion

While faith-based communities have many opportunities to work for a healthier environment, one immediate step that can be taken, which will markedly improve air and

water quality in our communities, is an end to the use of coal tar-based sealants and blacktopping materials on driveways and parking lots in our homes and places of worship.

Coal tar, a known carcinogen, is in the seal-coating and blacktopping materials used on asphalt driveways. Studies have shown that this harmful product is easily transferred from our driveways and parking lots into the air, into water through rainfall run-off, and into our homes on the soles of our shoes. We wind up inhaling the residue, and our children and seniors are especially susceptible to its toxic effects. Communities across the country, from Austin, Texas to nearby Winnetka have banned the use of coal tar additives in asphalt sealcoating materials. The state of Minnesota issued a statewide ban on the product despite intense lobbying by the coal industry to continue its use. Austin has even seen major improvement in the water quality of local lakes since their ban.

Alternatives to coal tar-based materials are easy to find. Many driveway installers and seal-coating companies already use coal tar-free materials and will provide them when asked. The cost difference is minor and the durability of the material is comparable. Most importantly, use of coal tar-free materials protects the quality of our air and water and supports the mission of faith-based communities to be good stewards of the environment. There is an article on coal tar sealants at: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-01-18/health/ct-met-toxic-coal-tar-sealant-20110115_1_coal-tar-sealants-new-doubts-cast