

Public Policy and Environmental Action Team Minutes
January 12, 2021 6-7 PM
Via Zoom

Facilitator: Charles Skold

Minutes: Sarah Braik

Present: Kathy Coughlin, John Hennessy, Charles Skold, Barbara Ryland, John Leddy, Connee Bingham, Ralph Cordes, Mary Linnemann

1. Reflection (Charles)

- a. “Dear Child of God, I write these words because we all experience sadness, we all come at times to despair, and we all lose hope that the suffering in our lives and in the world will ever end. I want to share with you my faith and my understanding that this suffering can be transformed and redeemed. There is no such thing as a totally hopeless case. Our God is an expert at dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine. God created order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, and God can do so always, can do so now--in our personal lives and in our lives as nations, globally. ... Indeed, God is transforming the world now--through us--because God loves us.”

— **Desmond Tutu, God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time**

2. Division of roles between Charles and Sarah

- a. Charles and Sarah will take turns facilitating and taking minutes. Sarah will put together the agenda and send out the minutes. There will be an action step highlighted following each meeting with a reminder in the email with the minutes. **Members may contribute opening inspiration-just email Charles or Sarah.**

3. Diocesan and legislative updates - John Hennessy

- a. The legislature is still organizing itself-no public gatherings -all done electronically-making opportunities for different kinds of advocacy. The first draft of the biennial budget was released Friday-economic indicators stronger than expected and hopefully we will get some federal relief. Budget status quo-things we care about preserved but nothing new. John is cautiously optimistic. Drop John an email with questions about the budget if they occur. Republican response fairly tepid so far. Rainy Day Fund will be larger than ever, though many will say it's raining now. Medicaid stabilization fund \$25 million-a real cushion. We are getting a more generous Medicaid reimbursement than anticipated. The Permanent Committee on Indigenous and Tribal Relations will be very active and we'll follow the big recommendations. Committees will start formal orientation next Tuesday and public hearings in perhaps two weeks. Over 1700 new pieces of

legislation with a lot of duplication. Only 119 have been published and John monitors weekly. He will let us know which ones he thinks are significant.

- b. **We are all encouraged to register for the Maine Equal Justice legislative advocacy training January 22, 11-1 PM. [Register Here!](#)**
 - c. The Maine Council of Churches Public Policy Committee has its first meeting tomorrow Marge Kilkelly and retired Catholic priest Mike Seavey have joined the committee (even though the Catholics have pulled out Mike Seavey is an at-large member and one of the strongest faith voices around).
4. Ongoing matters
- a. Develop an agenda for our February 9 meeting with Sen. King
 - i. Suggestions
 - 1. Open with a meditation then meet and greet-tell him who we are
 - 2. Send him the agenda beforehand
 - 3. We may need to personally invite members who don't usually attend-Charles and Sarah will make some phone calls
 - 4. 10-15 mins for him to speak on how he practices his faith in the Senate
 - 5. Ask him how he views the need for people of faith to ask for accountability and reconciliation without retribution
 - ii. Charles and Sarah and John will work on an agenda after finding out how much time he has-put him on the front of the agenda. **Please email us with ideas for the agenda.**
 - b. Beloved Community and the Transformation Task Force
 - i. Mary Linnemann reported that the first Sacred Ground group in an effort to put to use the knowledge gained have decided to work with St. Luke's on becoming more welcoming. At the same time Sarah Dowling started Beloved Community, so they are working in collaboration. Anna Maria Christie will be taking over as Senior Warden. Ben has appointed a task force/steering committee to work on racial justice issues in St. Luke's within the congregation and in the community. Group of 5 (Judd Hume, Mary, L, Eric Busch, Sarah Dowling and Sam Allen. With Ben and Eleanor providing input) are meeting to determine the committee framework. They will most likely report to the vestry monthly. Next vestry meeting will consider and decide on amendments and in February will finalize edits and how to implement them. **Contact Ben if you wish to be added to the task force.** No mission statement yet. Kathy would like to join and will contribute what the Florida counterpart has been doing.
 - c. Diocesan Climate Council
 - i. Bishop is fully supportive but wants leadership commitment-perhaps there could be co leaders. Jenny Reece, Peter Jenks, and Pat Sprague have said

yes. Sarah will update them, and contact Elaine Hewes, who has been recommended by Eleanor. The Bishop will reach out to them after Sarah contacts Elaine. John will facilitate with the Bishop.

- d. How to spread the word about the Portland-South Portland [One Climate Future](#) plan and the [Maine Climate Council's plan](#) and also how this Team could be involved. Robert Stoddard is unavailable. Recommendations for a member of a Council working group to be invited to one of our meetings soon. **The links to the membership list of the seven working groups are [HERE](#). Please identify any you think we should invite.** From One Climate Future: Julie Rosenbach or Lucy Perkins-Mary could invite one of them. We will consider for March or April.
- e. Bridging the two Maines
 - i. Last month we suggested Zoom conversations between paired District 1/District 2 or rural/urban parishes. There has been conversation at the diocesan level but nothing determinative. [Conversations across Difference](#) is a National ECUSA resource for facilitating this kind of conversation-will officially launch on MLK Day. We could host this kind of discussion at one of our meetings and invite others or host a special event inviting others. The Racial Justice Council struggled to develop the MLK Day event-we can see how well they did persuading people to participate. Ralph will attend and report back to us. Details are in the Epistle and will be in the Dio log this Thursday.
 - ii. **ACTION STEP: Between now and the next meeting review [Conversations across Difference](#) and bring ideas to the meeting.**
 - iii. Here are some resources
 1. From *Love Is the Way: Holding on to hope in troubling times*, by Bishop Michael Curry
 - a. Identify the shared moral values and spiritual principles where we agree.
 - b. Share your personal story about how those values and principles became important to you.
 - c. Seek to apply those values to current challenges, and identify commonalities.
 - d. Craft ways forward that best approximate those values and principles.
 2. <https://heterodoxacademy.org/library/purple-film-and-discussion-guide/>
 3. <https://heterodoxacademy.org/library/political-polarization-resource-list/>
 4. <https://craigfreshley.com/>
 5. [Braver Angels](#)

- a. Hold America Together-tonight 8 PM [REGISTER](#)
 - b. [With Malice Toward None initiative](#)
6. <https://www.reunitedstates.tv/preview>
7. This [Leonard Pitts column](#) appeared in the January 13 edition of the Press Herald New matters
- f. Earth Day
 - i. [Faith Climate Action Week: Sacred Ground: Cultivating Connections Between our Faith, our Food, and the Climate](#)-Sarah has ordered the kit and will let everyone know what is in it when she receives it.
 - ii. [Imagine! God's Earth and People Restored](#): Virtual Ecumenical Advocacy Days April 18-21, 2021 There may be a registration fee-contact John H re: Diocese covering the cost if you would like to attend.
- g. Join members of the Racial Justice Council Sunday Jan. 17 from 4 - 5 for a Zoom conversation about our experiences with race. Wherever you are on your journey with this topic which is central to being the Church that we are called to be, we hope you will join us. All are welcome! Bring an open mind and open heart. Click [here](#) to participate.
5. Next meeting Tuesday February 9, 2021-Sarah will facilitate, Charles take minutes