

81st GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

REFLECTIONS BY THE REV. JENN LATHAM

Through the lens of the ministry of environmental justice, the 81st General Convention was remarkable for the number of Creation Care initiatives and how many people spoke in support of green initiatives. A newly formed Green Caucus brought folks together from across the church to talk about how we as a church can meet the challenges of climate change and environmental justice. The Green Caucus meets monthly to share information and encourage one another in our work to care for God's beautiful masterpiece. If you are interested in joining the Green Caucus, you can find them on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556013429896>) or can email their leader, Emily Hopkins (emilyhopkins4@gmail.com).

On the first day of GC81 the Green Caucus gathered with the Green Bishops to share lunch. We were greeted by Dame Dr. Jane Goodall (in a video address: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TQy4nViBRnklcE2mu3vllB8REMBmpczm/view?usp=drive_link) who encouraged us as religious leaders to share the message of loving our neighbors, including God's other-than-human creatures. She also encouraged us to bring a message of hope to our congregations, highlighting the resilience of nature, the amazing human ability to solve problems using technology, and the energy and commitment of young people who are empowered to take action. She encouraged each of us to know we can make an impact in small ways every day, that when gathered all together have a cumulative effect.

We also heard from Ronny Newman, with the U.S. Department of the Treasury, who shared the benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act for non-profits who are working toward carbon neutrality. Churches and other non-profits can receive up to 30% cash back for solar projects, EV chargers, and purchasing EV cars, making all of these carbon reducing investments more affordable. For more information, check out this website. (<https://www.irs.gov/inflation-reduction-act-of-2022>)

Finally, there were a couple of resolutions adopted by GC81 that will have positive impacts on the Church's efforts to reduce our carbon output by 2030 (something that the Church committed to doing at GC80 two years ago). First, Resolution A021 creates a \$3 million loan program for churches to draw on for carbon reducing capital projects. This program is intended to help churches reach net zero by 2030. Second, Resolution B002 builds Eco-Region Creation Networks of dioceses that will help regions that share watersheds to "link people, projects and properties dedicated to nature-based solutions to slow climate change through preserving and restoring plant communities appropriate to their bioregion; modeling transformative agriculture and food systems; and tackling issues of water quality and supply."

Finally, Resolution D050 allocates funds to help map out steps for our churches to reach net-zero by 2030. This final resolution, D050, was submitted by the Diocese of Northern California, where they have 37 churches in the process of attaining net-zero. See the Church of St. Martin's website describing their journey to become a zero carbon church. (<https://churchofstmartin.org/2021/04/08/becoming-a-zero-carbon-church/>)