

stewardship

ECONOMIC SENSE MEETS MORAL IMPERATIVE AT CHURCH ENERGY SUMMIT

Economic sense met moral imperative at an Oct. 18 energy summit that brought energy and conservation experts together with church leaders rallying around environmental stewardship and regular church folk concerned about paying winter heating bills. They were there to get and give each other both answers and inspiration.

At a time of year when parishes are mostly focused on stewardship in terms of money-raising campaigns, bishop suffragan of Massachusetts Bud Cederholm said it was “a delight to be hosting a stewardship conference, a summit, where savings, sustainability and spirituality draw us together as we seek to be better stewards in this season.”

Some who attended were looking for ways to upgrade aging church facilities and lower heating bills; others were there out of concern about global warming. Either motive is, at heart, about stewardship, they were told, as one after another of the day’s experts and church leaders sought to connect conservation and renewable energy consumption with living consistently with one’s faith.

“Too often we check our faith at the door when we enter the boiler room or vestry room for meetings,” Tom Nutt-Powell told the gathering. A member of All Saints Parish in Brookline, he is a founder of Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light, a nonprofit which promotes renewable energy and helps congregations of all faiths reduce their energy consumption and operating costs. The organization co-sponsored the energy summit with the Diocese of Massachusetts. It was held at WGBH’s new LEED-certified complex in Brighton, built on a reclaimed brownfield.

Brian Rosborough, a member of Trinity Church in Concord and a founder of Earthwatch Institute, gave the assembly what he described as “a light dusting on climate change” that made clear the scope and urgency of the global warming crisis.

“We know that the pace of warming appears to be accelerating,” he said. “We know that nature prefers steps to gradients, so there will be surprises that will visit us in the form of floods, heat waves, extreme weather events, wild fires, sea level rise, eventually, and animal extinctions. Sadly, the most vulnerable peoples will suffer the most, making climate change a moral issue.

“It’s the moral dimension of climate change that calls us and our churches to reflect on the value and efficacy of our indulgences and our carbon-intensive lifestyles.”

Then he interrupted himself: “‘Whoa!’ you might be saying. ‘I thought we were going to tighten some windows today and change a few light bulbs!’” This is where the moral meets the practical, he said.

“Energy conservation really is the first step in qualifying you—us—to speak with reason and force about the value systems and interdependencies that sustain life on Earth. If you measure the problem just by carbon dioxide emissions alone, the U.S. is 27 percent of the world problem, and buildings are 40 percent of the U.S. problem,” Rosborough said.

Nutt-Powell confirmed that, per capita per hour of use, houses of worship are the biggest energy wasters in this country. “We’ve got old buildings, inefficient HVAC systems, big sanctuaries, unique architecture, unusual usage patterns. So what do we do with our old holy piles of stone?” He suggested a pilgrimage to the boiler room for starters.

Trinity Church in South Weymouth made one last year, and as a result of upgrading to a high-efficiency gas boiler, financed by a combination of parishioner donations and a diocesan low-interest Stokes Fund loan, the parish anticipates heating costs reduced by almost half.

24 questions toward effective environmental stewardship

Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light (MIPandL) posed 24 questions to energy summitters. Here are some of them:

Electricity

Do all your fixtures have compact fluorescent bulbs?

Do you have vacancy sensing light switches in restrooms or other spaces?

Are all your appliances, audio/visual and office equipment Energy Star?

Do you have appropriate artificial light levels?

Heat/Air Conditioning/Domestic Hot Water (DHW)

Is your heat generation (boiler or furnace) 90 percent efficient?

Is your DHW generation 84 percent efficient?

Is your air conditioning SEER 13+? Are your controls “smart”?

Is your distribution/space conditioning equipment highest efficiency?

Do you make good use of active/passive solar heat and natural light?

Thermal

Are your walls, ceilings and floors insulated?

Do you have high efficiency windows?

Do you keep doors closed between heating/cooling zones?

Do you have interior storm windows for thermal performance?

Have you created conditioning zones that match use patterns?

Do you set thermostats to a temperature compatible with use?

Behavior

Do you track your utility use and cost monthly?

Do you know your household’s carbon footprint?

Do you purchase offsets to reduce your carbon footprint?

Do you turn off equipment and unplug chargers when not in use?

Do you turn off lights in unoccupied rooms?

Do you have an equipment maintenance contract?

“Yes,” MIPandL says, “is the right answer for effective environmental stewardship. ‘Don’t Know’ or ‘No’ is a prompt to start the journey for these everyday actions.” ●



PHOTO: Tracy J. Sukraw

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Welcoming energy audit participants were Bishop Bud Cederholm, Tom Nutt-Powell from All Saints Parish in Brookline and Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light, and Darcy Immerman from St. Luke's Church in Scituate and a director of business development at AECOM Energy.

"In addition to conserving energy, all of us should green up and make clean energy choices. Not doing this is like refusing to swim because you're drowning," Nutt-Powell said.

He moderated a panel of representatives from local congregations that Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light has worked with, where, in most cases, small, practical steps accumulated into significant changes in their energy consumption.

Doug Stuart of Eliot Church (UCC) in Newton, for example, described starting with the installation of setback thermostats so that the church wasn't being kept at 72 degrees year around. That was followed by light bulb replacements and installation of a more efficient oil boiler, storm windows and insulation. A new toilet near the day-care facility resulted in huge water savings.

"What is hard to do is to get this into the bloodstream of the organizational structure of the church," Stuart said. "Individuals are energized to do this, but to get it to be a program that is creatively engaged in by the staff at the church hasn't been easy," he admitted.

The gathering also heard from a panel of experts on shrinking carbon footprints, environmentally responsible building and design practices and where to turn for professional and financial help.

"The simple math is that the most cost-effective and sustainable kilowatt, therm or gallon is the one that is not used," Darcy Immerman, a member of St. Luke's Church in Scituate and a vice president and director of business development for AECOM Energy, said.

Weatherizing buildings, switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs, getting rid of an inefficient boiler, putting up solar panels—all are "prayerful, meaningful ways of expressing our connection to God's creation," the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, an author and environmental activist, told the gathering. She talked about environmental awareness and activism in terms of spiritual awakening, the stages of which she framed in the

Christian terms of creation, crucifixion and resurrection.

"I think many of us have a lot of healing to do. Many of us lead lives that are quite alienated from the natural world," she said, adding that the average North American spends only four percent of each day outdoors, including time spent in cars.

"Creation is the stage when we discover that great love affair that's going on between God and God's creation in which we are caught up. To me that's about growing a bigger heart. We only want to save what we love," she said.

Bishop Cederholm said the summit "exceeded all expectations" and that he hoped the networking he witnessed during the day would translate into action.

"I fear that in this time of economic anxiety, there will be a stepping back away from environmental goals," he said. "My hope and prayer is that we will not be part of that stepping back but that we, as stewards knowing we've been blessed by abundance in creation, will help and encourage others to continue to step forward when we leave this place." ●

—Tracy J. Sukraw

Pilgrims *continued from page 4*

Jarrett is a former rector of the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Boston who, now retired, lives and works at St. Francis House, a Catholic Worker house in New London.

Bald and gray-bearded, wearing sandals and carrying a wooden walking stick, he looked the part of peacenik and prophet. He was ruddy from two weeks of walking under the autumn sun, but the deep lines around his clear eyes seemed as much a result of ready laughter as of squinting against the glare toward the road ahead. He was carrying his sober message with a good humor and optimism that were no less convincing for being so out of synch with the tenor of the times. Jarrett believes that walking is a witness that might make a difference. He actually believes peace is a possibility, no matter how elusive the concept or lonely the cause. He believes it because Jesus did.

Walking, Jarrett preached at the cathedral, is both a spiritual discipline and a biblical tradition.

"Jesus of Nazareth whom we Christians call our Lord and Saviour walked all over his country of Palestine, teaching and healing and gathering disciples, praying, listening to people, sharing with them a vision he called the kingdom of God," Jarrett said. "Martin Luther King Jr. called it the beloved community. People everywhere catch a glimpse of this vision and desire to live in its beauty."

He recalled catching just such a glimpse the day before, at the anti-war rally on the Common: "A young man with a biblical quotation on his T-shirt: 'The effect of righteousness'—also translated as justice—'will be peace.' A hopeful vision, just wonderful!" Jarrett said. It's the direction he and his fellow walkers hoped they were headed. As Jarrett's own T-shirt read: "Praying with our feet." One step at a time.

"I invite you also to walk with us, with others or on your own, and learn what walking teaches: humility and courage," Jarrett told the congregation. "Humility and courage are what we need to know as a people, as a nation, as a church. The church, you and I, must not just talk about peace, about justice or the care of creation. We must walk with Christ and with other people to change the world." ●

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