GENERAL CONVENTION 80

Reflection by The Rev. Jenn Latham

(Posted November 24, 2022) GC 80 was my first in person experience with General Convention. As an alternate, I sat at the back of the delegate floor and observed for the first two days. I am one of the co-leaders of our diocesan Creation Care and Environmental Justice Task Force, so I was especially interested in what resolutions were coming through that committee to be voted on by the deputies and bishops. When I saw the primary resolution that had been put forward, I was inspired. Why? Both houses confirmed Resolution A087, the commitment to a goal of net carbon neutrality by 2030.

Earlier in the year I had heard a speaker at UH Mānoa (Leah Stokes; click HERE to view the YouTube video) who had told the audience that while Hawai`i's commitment to 100% renewable energy by 2045 was good, it needed to happen faster. The energy policy expert's main point was that there was no time to lose because even if we are able to reduce everyone's carbon footprint to zero in the next few years, we will still have global warming that will dramatically and negatively affect millions of people across the world. After listening to her talk, I had an aha moment, "We, as a church, need to try to help move the commitment to net zero as soon as possible." Learning that The Episcopal Church had committed itself to this by 2030 was both affirming and motivating.

Can we, as a diocese also commit to this goal? I believe we are well positioned to do so. Some of our churches are already using renewable solar energy, and the current incentives could make it possible for all of our churches to shift to solar energy within the next few years. At our recent Education Day we had a workshop led by Hawai`i Interfaith Power and Light (https://www.hipl.org), who brought us local experts in energy conservation and solar power. If your church (or home) has not had a visit from Hawai`i Energy (https://hawaiienergy.com), this is a great place to start to find ways to reduce your energy consumption. After you are sure you are being as efficient as you can be, approaching a solar company to do an assessment is the next step. They will determine how much energy you need and design a solar system that will supply you with that need. There are different options for funding this project, some which require no financial output from the congregation. A few other ways to help offset the carbon that you do produce are: planting native trees that can sequester carbon, buying carbon offsets, volunteering to help an organization that is restoring native species and eradicating invasive species.

The Creation Care and Environmental Justice Task Force is happy to help you! Please feel free to contact me at revjenn.hnc@gmail.com for more information.