

## Climate Justice Action Group 2020 – 2021

Created for the BC Synod Convention 2021

### *The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. (Psalm 24:1)*

The Climate Justice Action Group (CJAG) was formed in January of 2020. What began with an intention to often meet virtually, due to distances and for the sake of convenience and cost savings, soon became a necessity with the pandemic. Meetings have been held regularly every month or two. Members of CJAG are comprised of lay and clergy members of the Synod along with our Bishop (names at the end of this report).

We began by defining our mandate and scope as reflected in the Guiding Document we adopted. We strive to be “influencers”, in ways listed in this report, as we encourage all parts of the BC Synod to engage in the urgent and biblical work of climate justice. We want to inspire “change from below” among the congregations and members of the BC Synod and beyond.

The Guiding Document prioritizes both the safeguarding of God’s creation and working systemically for climate justice, by fostering awareness and action throughout the BC Synod. We seek to educate ourselves and our siblings around the Synod, provide resources and promote advocacy. As the world begins to recover from the Covid pandemic, we support the movement for a “just recovery”, including ecological justice.

Our work as the Climate Justice Action Group is rooted in our biblical faith and liturgical practice. Examples include the learning and activities promoted annually during the Season of Creation from September 1, World Day of Prayer for Creation, until October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. This observance is sponsored ecumenically, internationally and by the Lutheran World Federation. CJAG promoted the celebration of the Season of Creation in 2020 throughout the Synod, with its theme “Jubilee for the Earth”. We created a promotional video; encouraged viewing of the Season of Creation international webinar, then facilitated a subsequent discussion with 12 participants; and organized a Zoom presentation, “Care of Creation”, attended by 24 participants, given by The Reverend Laurel Dykstra, the priest of *Salal and Cedar*, a Watershed Discipleship ministry of the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster.

At the time of the writing of this report, CJAG is planning for the celebration of 2021 Season of Creation: “A Home for All? Renewing the Oikos of God”. In addition to encouraging all congregations to observe this time in worship, study, discussion, and commitment, we are arranging with a film distributor to make the powerful and urgent documentary, *The Story of Plastic*, available for viewing in the Synod the final week of the Season of Creation, with an evening discussion scheduled virtually for September 30. This film documents the systemic connections as to how plastic, with its source in fossil fuel extraction, is a major cause of the destruction and degradation of the planet. Awareness of this can lead to change.

For Lent 2021, we created and made available a “carbon fast calendar” for the days of the season; and organized and facilitated a Zoom presentation with Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Professor of Theological and Social Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, and Director of the PLTS Center for Climate Justice and Faith. Cynthia’s theme was “Climate Justice: Faith Active in Love”. We invited members of our Synod as well as those of the Anglican Dioceses of British Columbia and New Westminster. 32 participants attended. Future involvement of members/congregations of our Synod with programs of the PLTS Center for Climate Justice and Faith is a possibility to be considered.

We have connected with the ecological justice work of KAIROS Canada and want to publicize this connection more throughout the Synod. One such project we participated in was the Defend Old Growth Forest advocacy action with postcards provided by KAIROS and Rolling Justice Bus and sent to leaders in the BC provincial government.

Individual members in Climate Justice Action Group have participated in various actions, workshops and events, and subsequently reported on these activities with our group. These included webinars on BC Climate Action, 2020 and Beyond; City of Vancouver Climate Emergency Action Plan; Earth Day Conference; Anglican Church of England EcoChurch Conference; KAIROS series on love and creation; For Our Kids Town Hall; Raise Your Voice in Faith for Climate Justice; and the Trans Mountain pipeline. There was participation in Trans Mountain pipeline protests, and voicing objection, including in communication with Coquitlam mayor Richard Stewart, to using Colony Farm as a construction staging area for the pipeline. In addition to the aforementioned reporting, updates were given on resistance to logging of the Fairy Creek old growth forest on Vancouver Island; an investigation of the activities of the present owner of the pulp & paper mill at Port Alberni, who also owns several other Canadian mills; and possible oil exploitation of the Okavango Delta in Botswana, a UNESCO World Heritage site. One of our members participated in the Vancouver GreenFaith action in March—an interfaith gathering to pray, meditate, sing and ring bells in front of Federal Minister of the Environment Jonathan Wilkinson’s constituent office in North Vancouver. Another member posted a picture and a request to stop old growth logging at both her MP and MLA’s offices.

A challenge and request from CJAG: We dream of being able to ‘get the word out’ to the various parts of our Synod in a more timely fashion so that all could be engaged in this important and faith-based work of climate justice. As the Synod updates its website, we would hope to utilize interactive and dynamic aspects of a website to post relevant actions and workshops regularly to invite people’s engagement. It’s not possible to be moved by the Spirit to do the work if people don’t know about it. The work of climate justice is huge, can be overwhelming but, no doubt, there is a piece that will be of interest to every person if they are but aware.

We welcome all members of the BC Synod, lay and clergy, to partner with us, to work with us, to serve with us on the Climate Justice Action Group. We enjoy working with and supporting

one another as we, with God's help, seek to address the enormous challenges now facing the creation of which we are all a part, this wondrous home we are called to steward well for all.

Submitted by the members of CJAG:

*Jason Assam, Gail Berger, Rev. Tim Dutcher-Walls, Roger Emsley, Barb Smart, David Stroud, Claire Thompson, Rev. Katrina Vigen, Bishop Greg Mohr*

*Co-chairs: Louis Giguere, Rev. Brenda Nestegaard Paul*

## COVID-19 Response Team

### Report to the 2021 Synod Convention

The COVID-19 pandemic came upon us with relatively little warning and changed our world seemingly overnight. Those early days of the pandemic were anxious times for many and there was much uncertainty. The experience of our churches was no different. One Sunday we were gathering together to hear the gospel proclaimed in word, song, sacrament and prayer, and the next our buildings were quiet and empty. It was a confusing and distressing time for those for whom regular Sunday worship is an important part of their lives.

The leadership of our church - the national bishop and assistants, our synod bishops and assistants, synod officers and related support staff - did an admirable job advising us and guiding us through some very difficult initial weeks and months. We quickly figured out ways to stay connected with one another and continue to gather for worship using several online platforms.

As the pandemic wore on, it became obvious that we were in this for a lot longer than we initially imagined. The BC Synod decided it needed to have a dedicated team of people who would review all the information coming from several sources and pass along the relevant materials to congregations and leaders in a timely fashion.

The BC Synod assembled a team of people, one rostered and three lay, assisted by Rev. Kathy Martin, to work in concert with the synod office to provide pastors, lay leaders and congregations with the most accurate and current information so that they could make the best decisions for their churches. It has been our great privilege take on this task and we hope that you have found the information and resources we have provided to be useful.

Much of our work has been focussed on creating and updating the “COVID-19 Guidelines for Congregations” document, which can be found on the BC Synod homepage. We strive to make that document as clear and concise as possible and address all the areas of concern that congregations may have. It is a living document and will change over time as the recommendations and health orders change and evolve. We have also made ourselves available to anyone who may have questions that are not covered by the Guidelines.

Our team has been greatly assisted by the hard work and dedication of Pastor Kathy Martin who acted as a liaison between us and the leaders of both the BC Synod and the BC government. She ensured that we always had the latest information to work with and that our work was in keeping with the directives of the synod council and bishop. Thank you Pastor Kathy!

The pandemic is still with us which means our team continues to be active. We hope that soon we will no longer be needed. Until that time, we will continue to keep our congregations and our leaders informed of the current state of restrictions and recommendation that relate to our churches as well as the best and safest public health practises. If any congregation or individual has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Rev. Brian Krushel, Chair

Karen Lee, Secretary

Jean Jay

Robin Dielissen

Rev. Kathy Martin, Assistant to the Bishop

## Missions Committee

### Report to the 2021 Synod Convention

The Missions Committee exists to help nurture new ministries in the synod and to help existing ministries live into God's call to love and bless the world in the service of the gospel. For several years now the Committee has seen its focus as supporting and furthering the synod's missional renewal process. This has been accomplished over the last three years through the activities described below.

#### **CECF Grants**

The largest part of the Committee's work continues to be the administration of grants to fund missional experiments. The funds for these grants come from our synod's allocation of the annual interest generated by the Church Extension and Capital Fund (CECF). Grants are given for experiments that:

- a) explore what God is doing in the neighbourhood;
- b) seek to develop relationships between congregations and others in the community;
- c) encourage participation in God's mission in the local community;
- d) encourage action and reflection learning.

The Committee has sought to be encouraging and empowering in this granting process. We see our role as animators and collaborators with each successful applicant in mutual missional learning. Accordingly, we seek to walk with each applicant as much as possible sharing insights and suggestions where it might enhance a proposed experiment and following up with interviews to help capture missional learnings.

Our vision is to deepen the missional mindset across our synod and our church. For this purpose we continue to seek effective ways to tell the story of the experiments that have been carried out. We are very much guided by our synod's vision of becoming a community of "collaboration, communication, and connection".

The result has been nothing less than inspiring. Applications have increased so much that we moved from a single application intake to three annual intakes. And still we entertain other applications that come in between application deadlines. The missional imagination of our synod is growing and that is exciting!

A sample of just some of the applications that have been approved are as follows:

- Several neighbourhood barbecue events hosted by various congregations around our synod;
- A "Music in the Park" summer music festival and community gathering with the participation of members of Church of the Cross, Victoria;
- A "Pastor is Public" experiment allowing Pastor Diana Edis (St Paul's, Prince Rupert) to hold public "office hours" at a local coffee shop/eatery making herself available to the community for questions, prayers, and conversation;
- VBS-Style Pro-D Day programming for neighbourhood families of Hills of Peace in Kamloops;

- Rosemont Community Kitchen experiment with providing cooking classes to youth and families through Ascension, Nelson;
- “Tablets for Seniors” an experiment to offer an iPad lending library and training for seniors at a neighbouring care home, through Church of the Cross, Victoria
- A “Six Days for Social Justice” initiative at Our Saviour’s, Prince George aimed at addressing issues of inclusion of the LGBTQ2S+ community together with follow-up community outreach projects such as a “Rainbow Mural” for the church.

And that is just the tip of the iceberg. Interested applicants are encouraged to contact Pastors Kathy Martin or Eric Krushel or any member of the Missions Committee to discuss ideas and for support in submitting an application.

### **Congregational Support**

The synod budget provides an annual line for “congregational support” which the committee also administers. These funds are intended as support for new mission starts in the synod as well as temporary assistance for congregations who may need a little help moving forward with their mission. In the past the funds have helped support the All Saints Mission in Kelowna, Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Surrey, and our joint ministry in Barriere/Clearwater. At this present moment no funds are under commitment. But the committee is actively exploring some innovative proposals for new ministries including such proposals as social enterprise projects.

### **Articulating Theology**

Within the last three years the committee initiated a conversation to help explore the theological groundings of our missional renewal process in the interests of being able to articulate a clear understanding of this emphasis from a Lutheran perspective. Some progress was made before the process was interrupted for various reasons, including the pandemic. It remains a goal on our agenda.

### **Congregational Assistance**

The Committee continues to work together with Bishop Greg and Assistant Kathy in certain cases to assist congregations struggling with challenges to the future of their ministry. Most recently we have been in conversation with one congregation to identify new possibilities which address certain unique challenges to sustainability in their context.

### **Global Missions**

This aspect of our work has been fairly quiet over the last few years. Our companion synod agreement with IL-P expired several years ago and there is a desire to renew it. However, doing so has not been as easy as hoped, being hampered by struggles internal to the Lutheran church in Peru, the death of president of IL-P Rev. Adita Torres from COVID-19, and general political turmoil in Peru.

However, Pastor Lori-Anne Boutin-Crawford on behalf of the Committee and Bishop Greg were able to travel in November of 2019 to Guatemala for the ELCA Companion Synod Consultation and meet with Rev. Torres. Good conversation was had and several matters were discussed. We still hope that this effort will bear fruit under the guidance of their new president and leadership.

### **Committee Membership**

I am humbled by the level of commitment and dedication of our current committee members. We are a very active committee which beginning in the fall of this year began meeting monthly to keep up with its agenda. The work has demanded many meetings especially as our involvement with CECF applicants has expanded. But it is also exciting and inspiring to see how our missional renewal process is bearing the fruit of imagination and energy across our synod. The members bring many gifts, and the addition of a few new members within the last year has only added to our capacity. Many thanks to the committee for much hard and fine work.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Eric Krushel  
Chair Synod Missions Committee  
Synod Missions Consultant

## Committee for Theological Education and Leadership (CTEL)

Report to the 2021 Synod Convention

CTEL meets semi-annually to review and support candidates for diaconal and rostered ministry. Upon reflection on our mandate, our members have chosen to retain the original name, CTEL, rather than Candidacy Committee, a name used in some other synods.

Since 2018, we tracked 1 Diaconal candidate (continuing) and 5 Master of Divinity candidates (1 was ordained, 2 withdrew, 1 completed internship and awaits a call, 1 is currently interning). Each candidate is assigned a committee member as a relator. We also endorsed 2 pastors to be considered for ministry in the ELCIC; one subsequently chose early retirement and one was brought onto the roster. Several students took advantage of the transportation grant that we offered.

Bishop Greg Mohr reported on pertinent Synod information. Assistant to the Bishop, Kathy Martin has provided meaningful presentations on missional leadership skills. CTEL reviewed Saskatchewan's process for pastoral ordination and diaconal consecration. Our committee approved a social innovation lab proposal from Rev. Kristin Steele. The purpose of the lab is to gather information on loneliness and isolation in the clergy and to develop strategies to manage wellness. Covid has delayed progress on this study.

LTS online courses already provides increased flexibility for mature student candidates who are often pursuing studies at LTS as a second career choice. As with other post-secondary institutions, online learning was necessitated by Covid-19 restrictions. The challenge for CTEL and LTS continues to be recruitment of new students, especially when travel restrictions have curtailed international student visas. In June, CTEL also provided input to Rev. Dr. Kayko Driedger Hesslein, new to the faculty of LTS, about future needs of our MDiv candidates.

In 2019 we welcomed Rev. Rebekah Swanson to our meetings as the representative of the national Program Committee for Leadership and Ministry (PCLM). PCLM has asked our group for input on several topics: missional leaders for the future, the feasibility of online CPE training (ABT Synod is looking at a trial), and participation in a national forum of candidacy committees. From PCLM we have learned about such challenges as the growing number of non-Lutheran background students entering the seminaries, seminary accreditation issues, and too few CPE sites. PCLM is reimagining the church of the future in terms of candidacy, training, ordination, education, and joint parishes.

Thank you to Rev. Jennifer Wilson (Lower Mainland) for serving two terms on CTEL. Thanks also to Rosalene Saleski, former 8-year CTEL member, for representing PCLM 2015 to 2019. And finally, our very best wishes are extended to Dr. Kristine Ruffatto on her retirement from LTS in June. Kristine represented the BC student candidates at our meetings for many years. Her replacement has yet to be named. Our next meeting is in November.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Baty, chairperson

**CTEL members:** Rev. Marvin Svingen, Glenn Harvey (secretary), Rev. Jennifer Wilson, Hugo Nunez-Angel, and Rev. Ed Chell, Bishop Greg Mohr, Rev. Kathy Martin, Ann Baty