

EJ* issues require our attention

Last October for the first time I had to decide on the spot whether and how to respond to an apparent conflict between meeting needs for open space and for affordable housing. The Diocesan "social ministries" committees (concerned with the elderly, the homeless, the environment, among others) were preparing for Diocesan Convention. A resolution called on churches to use vacant land for affordable housing. I objected, knowing churches own increasingly rare open space in urban areas. Realizing that we had encountered a topic to be examined over time, and that challenges of improving quality of life for poor urban people are oversimplified by conceiving of open space and housing in opposition to each other, the group substituted the word *buildings* for *land* (use of vacant church *buildings*).

At a 2004 interfaith Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration in Winchester, preacher Janice Yancey (Lay Pastoral Assistant at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Westford) asked in light of the witness of Dr. King's life, " *Why aren't we closer to equal protection of whites and minorities under the law?*" It's a question we need to frame in connection with environmental work

"How do choices about where we live, where we create affordable housing, and how we affect nature and people through economic development decisions affect racial and economic justice?" Many of us strongly subscribe to equal protection, affordable housing, and caring for Creation . Those commitments can and need to be updated now by reading "signs of the times" and recognizing ways to integrate them. In January, 2004, an e-mail exchanged among local EJ leaders was distributed to a coalition working on The Clean and Healthy Communities Act—before the MA. legislature as S. 1190/

H.2121). It stated:

...running the new census numbers, etc. to see how things have changed since 1990 in MA with regard to environmental injustices. [o]ur preliminary results are pretty stunning...It would indicate that EJ crisis is worsening significantly in the less powerful communities (low income communities of color in particular). The implications of these findings are really important, as you can imagine." Oracle will try to learn more about the projected 2000 data and this Boston University study for its next issue. For more on EJ in general, see <http://www.tsulaw.edu/enviro/enviropg.htm>

What has distinguished environmental justice advocates from advocates for affordable housing, racial justice and environmental stewardship is that EJ sees these as interconnected (e.g. the Urban Environmental Initiative of EPA Region 1 held a seminar on "Smart Growth" in 1998). A fuller definition of environmental justice captures this very phenomenon — that poor communities' needs for economic development, housing, education, health, and transportation by definition can't be met in mutually cannibalizing ways.— But the individual issue constituencies have needed to encounter situations where the topics arise at once.

In February and March, begin (or continue) making connections among environmental and justice concerns. Attend:

- MA. Coalition for the Homeless Lobby Day — 9:30a February 23. Speaker is Professor Rachel G. Bratt from Tufts Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning Department. [Call 617-423-9162 x1090].
- Episcopal City Mission's Public Policy Network Lobby Day — February 26, 2004. Housing policies supported include: modifying buildings so existing units can still be used plus shoring up operating subsidies for public housing maintenance. Connections between aging of housing stock and increased childhood injuries and asthma are well established. [Call Rachel Anderson, ECM 617/482-4826, ext. 579].
- Learn more about the Ministry in Environmental Justice course at EDS [www.episdivschool.edu/whatsnew]
- ECM Brown Bag Conversation co-sponsored by Environmental Partnerships — March 8 The speaker is Lois Adams, Acting Director of the Rhode Island State Unit of the Environmental Protection Agency on the intersection of "smart growth", housing, and environmental justice. [12-2p at 138 Tremont Street.]
- Brown Bag lunch sponsored by coalition for The Clean and Healthy Communities Act — March 10. Speakers are MA Senator Jarrett Barrios (bill co-sponsor) and Galen Nelson (Money and Politics Project): "Who sets the agenda? When will Environmental Justice have its day?" [For location call Andrew Dixon 617-722-1650 and to get an asthma fact sheet. See Nelson's report and the BU report on EJ in MA at www.diomass.org/ECM.]

Susan Youmans, Editor

***EJ: a movement to ensure the rights of low-income and minority communities to clean and healthy environments"**

On page 2 see Convocation Highlights: Acting on climate change in your office; and Learning opportunities

Newsletter of the CMTE ON FAITH & THE ENVIRONMENT

Oracle Vol. 7 No. 2
February 2004 Episcopal Diocese of MA

Highlights from the Provincial Convocation On the Environment (11/21-22/03) Part 1.

While the talks presented by the featured speakers cannot be summarized, it's instructive to note the concerns they expressed to this audience and the topics these men follow to support their thinking.

John E. Carroll is a Catholic scholar and Professor of Environmental Conservation at the University of New Hampshire whose first widely used work was the textbook Environmental Diplomacy: An Examination and a Perspective of Canadian-U.S. Transboundary Environmental Relations in 1983 (U. of Michigan). Carroll's premise was that how a person lives life expresses his or her values. Carroll's concern was with major institutional framework as they affect living out values. His comments dealt with structural and economic issues that are controversial when dealt with head-on (as he did). Comparing capitalism, free enterprise, Christianity, and ecology as major frameworks, the critical question for him was whether or not they had *inherent limiting principles*. He contrasted monastic and popular Christianity, saying that only monastic Christianity is countercultural today, and can thus teach the links between sustainability and spirituality — the concepts being related in the sense that sustainability takes an act of faith in something bigger than we are. While observing that private enterprise has "scale problems", he described unrestrained markets in capitalism leading to oppression, idolatry, consumerism, and rape of the environment. — Carroll's new book Sustainability and Spirituality is to be released in August 2004.

Take action on climate change in your office

CERES and the World Resources Institute (WRI) invite you to attend a half-day workshop on how to measure and manage CO2 emissions from your office.

WRI gained practical knowledge about measuring and managing CO2 emissions for 4 years "through our own institutional commitment to reduce emissions. The experience has been informative, eye-opening and humbling. Holding ourselves to the same standard that we expect of others, has lent credibility to our interactions with the businesses we have called on to take action. We would like to share our "lessons learned" with others in the community and have developed a hands-on half-day workshop."

WHEN: Thursday, February 26, 2004, 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
WHERE: CERES' offices (99 Chauncy Street, 6th floor, Boston MA 02111) WHO SHOULD ATTEND: Ideal participants will include office managers, program assistants, program coordinators, permanent administrative support staff, or others most likely to be tasked with implementing an organizational commitment to manage emissions. No prior knowledge of calculating emissions is necessary. WHAT: Participants will learn all they need to know about how to track and calculate common emissions sources for offices

and approaches to implement their organization's internal climate protection goals. For more information, contact Samantha Putt del Pino at 202-729-7660, or email to sam@wri.org

Opportunities for learning, innovation, reflection

1. CERES

As an endorser of the CERES Principles the Episcopal Diocese of MA pays an annual membership fee to the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economic Systems. And there is an outstanding opportunity for interested parishioners to learn more about CERES this spring when its annual meeting is held on April 14th and 15th in Boston. ((See CERES.org for information about this year's meeting. E-mail Eosystems@aol.com to see extensive lists of speakers and topics from previous annual meetings.)

Note that CERES participation can be about more than an institution minding its own P's and Q's. CERES' other MO is supporting shareholder actions to bring pressure on corporate boards to address practices with important environmental effects. Some religious organizations are important participants in that work. We were invited by Mindy Lubber, new CERES Executive Director, to consider becoming active in that way also, and CFE is looking for people interested in this.

2. Community events/retreats

The Boston Urban Asthma Coalition is celebrating the graduation of five women from its first year of leadership training on February 13, 2004. The celebration of their commitment to improve communities for all children with asthma will be held at the Great Hall in Codman Square, from 6:00 to 9:00pm. Tickets are \$35.00. Agenda includes silent auction, food and drinks, awards, graduation and dancing. Call 617-279-2271 or 2273.

Catholic women's religious orders now use the "new universe story" (i.e. what modern science says about the origins of the universe) to provide a spiritual base for "Creation care". Among Protestants it is still easiest to find people looking at the theological significance of modern cosmology among science and religion faculty at seminaries. — This is one interesting learning from the Environmental Partnerships' tour of food and faith projects in eastern MA presented in November 2003.

We encountered two organizations that hold Holy Week retreats as well as other events during the year that address the "universe story" as well as intersections in individual practice among spirituality, art, and the environment — Crystal Spring in Plainfield, MA, is a farm owned by the Kentucky Dominican Sisters. Grailville, outside Cincinnati, Ohio, is an environmental, educational and retreat center of The Grail, an international movement of women committed to spiritual search, social action, ecological sustainability, and the release of women's creative energy. See websites — www.crystalspring.org and www.grailville.org.