2020 was a year many of us were glad to leave. The killing pandemic. Lost jobs and closed schools. Long lines at food banks. The pain of racial injustice. The stressful Presidential election and unrest that led to the attack on the Capitol. In addition, climate chaos was just as bad: fires in the West, heat waves in Europe and the Arctic, hurricanes in the South, drought in the Midwest. Our pain stretched beyond heartbreak. Pope Frances said, “the effects of the pandemic are themselves global, touching all the countries and peoples of the world, helping to aggravate deeply interrelated crises like those of the climate, food, the economy, and migration.”

But in 2020, we saw uplifting signs of renewal and hope. The selflessness of health care and other essential workers. The Virginia legislature passed laws to eliminate fossil fuel power plants and to expand solar and wind power. Fairfax County Supervisors and School Board Members were climate heroes, taking concrete steps to cut carbon pollution. Throughout the region, elected leaders and grassroots organizations took up the challenge of climate action.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew spoke to the faith that moves us to work for a better world in 2020 and in the years to come: “This unprecedented crisis has revealed the power and value of love and solidarity, which transcend human standards and bear the seal of God’s grace. The pandemic has reminded us that the world is larger than our individual concerns and ambitions, larger than our church and faith communities, and larger than our political powers and national interests.”

The 2020 FACS annual report shows how we came together in trying times. COVID-19, very much like the climate crisis, teaches us to listen to and learn from one another. Of being humble enough to care for and share with one another.

In peace and commitment,

Eric Goplerud
CHAIR
The Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS) was formed to create opportunities for people to act together effectively from their values, moral, spiritual, and religious beliefs. The faith community’s ability to organize large numbers of people who might not otherwise engage in advocacy makes it a critical asset to advancing climate justice solutions. Many people aren’t aware of decisions made at the local level that impact climate policies, yet that is where effects of climate change are felt most keenly. Persistent, local advocacy grounded in morality is how FACS makes an impact.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Philip Bane
Managing Director, Smart Cities Council

Anthony Granado
Vice President, Government Relations, Catholic Charities USA

Dr. Neelu Tummula
Physician, George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Erika Yalowitz
Court Officer, Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court, Arlington County
Our advocacy team structure and growing participation by our supporters continued to show its strength in influencing elected officials, staff, and policy. Through advisory panel participation, constituent meetings, and emails, the voice of the faith community in matters of climate and energy was heard. Our accomplishments included:

- Leading the effort to build-in strong carbon pollution reduction goals in the County-wide Energy and Climate Plan, now under development.
- Advocating successfully for full funding by Fairfax County of the first Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan.
- Pressing successfully for Fairfax County Public Schools to establish net zero and carbon saving goals.
- Inviting widespread participation by our supporters through use of a new tool, the FACS Advocacy Alert.
- Meeting with state legislators for the first time.
- Advocating successfully for passage of Solar Freedom legislation, eliminating eight roadblocks to the growth of solar energy in the Virginia Code.

WELCOME NEW STAFF!

Natalie Cain
Digital Organizer

Sashia Scott
Community Organizer, Prince William County

IMPACT

80+ Faith Communities

2500 supporters and climate activists
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

PUBLIC AWARENESS, EVENTS, & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- FACS held its annual Advocacy Workshop in January, hosted by Little River United Church of Christ.
- FACS hosted its Third Annual Sustainability Champion Awards in June. Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair, Jeff McKay, and Fairfax County School Board Chair, Karen Corbett Sanders, were both keynote speakers and recipients of a Legacy Award. More information about the other awardees is included in this annual report.
- FACS hosted the Fifth Annual Virginia Climate Crisis Forum: Reducing the Energy Burden in Post-Pandemic Virginia with four panelists and a conversation with Senator Mark Warner.
- FACS hosted a dozen webinars on topics including Faith and the Environment, Energy Justice, and Advocacy Training.

FIFTH ANNUAL
VIRGINIA CLIMATE CRISIS FORUM

Delegate Charniele Herring, Majority Leader of the Virginia House of Delegates
Chase Counts, Senior Director of Operations of Community Housing Partners
U.S. Senator Mark Warner (VA)
Harrison Godfrey, Executive Director of Virginia Advanced Energy Economy
Trieste Lockwood, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Ralph S. Northam

FOLLOW US
Tree of Life Program: FACS launched this new program to recognize, motivate, and inspire the sustainability actions of faith communities and at all levels.

Advocacy Teams: FACS organizes advocacy teams in Fairfax County, which meet monthly to discuss priorities, and meet with their elected officials twice annually. This year, new FACS hubs formed in Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, and Prince William County.

Support Gatherings: FACS hosted four webinars at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, providing a space for reflection and solidarity for our network.

Climate in the Pulpits: FACS, together with Virginia IPL and IPL (DC.MD.NoVA), offered this program in Virginia. 60+ faith communities participated, reaching more than 4,000 people through worship or hosted events with a climate focus.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 CHAMPIONS

Individual Champion: Debra Jacobson, JD
Debra brings great technical and organizational expertise to her advocacy and advice for Fairfax County. Debra is a member of the Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council representing the Dranesville District. She was a contributor to the Green Building Policy for county facilities, Chair of the Clean Energy for Fairfax Now Campaign of the Great Falls Group, and Member of Legislative and Executive Committees of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter. Her focus is on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate issues at the local and state levels working through the Sierra Club Great Falls Group, whom she credits immensely for recent advancements in the county.

Faith Community Champion: Mount Vernon Unitarian Church (MVUC)
The entire congregation of MVUC voted to be a part of a year-long focus on solutions to climate change, which is organized by the Climate Action Team (CAT) created in January of 2019.

This effort includes education on the issues, action projects, advocacy, spiritual support, and outreach. During its first year, the CAT organized nearly 50 events and projects with more than 1100 participants. The overarching goal for CAT is that a carbon neutral lifestyle becomes the default norm on church grounds and that the church serves as a hub and inspiration for members to live their own earth stewardship values at home.
Elected Official Champion: Karl Frisch, Providence District Representative on the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Board

Elected in autumn of 2019, Karl is one of two members of the FCPS Board serving on the Joint Environmental Task Force which coordinates County and School operations to increase environmental sustainability. Karl was integral in the development and approval of an amendment to the 2021-25 Capital Improvement Plan which calls for a study of the movement to net zero energy operations, and has been a leader in exploring the transition to electric school buses. Karl understands the “big picture” in terms of the great responsibility FCPS faces in dealing with the climate crisis. Karl will be fundamental to making FCPS an excellent example of what a school system can accomplish with strong leadership.

Local Business Champion: GreenFare Restaurant in Herndon Virginia

Gwyn Whittaker, owner of GreenFare, works to reduce carbon emissions through a plant-rich diet while putting people and the planet ahead of profits. GreenFare is certified organic, uses renewable energy, features locally sourced food and all compostable containers, while paying a living wage.

As an “education restaurant” GreenFare offers cooking classes, dinner and a movie, author book signings. In response to the recent COVID-19 crisis, Gwyn started a non-profit, GreenFare Health and Wellness (a certified 501(c)(3)) that had three projects: the now Virtual Fairfax Veg Fest, meal donations for medical workers at three local hospitals, and a new mask making activity that provided about 20,000 masks to Fairfax County as well as employment to about 40 Makers.
Thanks to the generosity of our donors, and successful grants, FACS' total revenue for 2020 was $150,142. Individual giving accounts for over 50% of our funding. Thank you!
The Social Action Committee of Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation is very impressed by FACS' visible engagement on the issue of climate change. FACS organizes its members to meet with their local politicians and advocate for a thoughtful climate agenda. This educates the politicians and motivates them to work in the area of climate change. We view FACS as an organization that is worthy of our support.

GET INVOLVED

We have five hubs of activity and advocacy: Fairfax County (our flagship), Prince William County, Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, and Montgomery County.

- Are you ready to join an advocacy team and put faith in action?
- Is your faith community interested in participating in an eco-actions program?
- Are you interested in volunteering your time and passion to help support FACS' operational, outreach, and/or program activities?

Visit FaithForClimate.org/Advocacy or email info@faithforclimate.org.

Interested in giving options? Visit FaithForClimate.org/Give.

THANK YOU

Many thanks to all of our volunteers and partners! We work today for a better tomorrow, and together we are stronger.

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