
OUR PRESENCE

FSM Mission and Focus
Fall 2019 Quarterly Report

FSM takes part in the global climate strike



On Friday, September 20th, 2019, many of our sisters joined in the global movement to demand action on climate change. Ten FSM—Srs. Judy Bell, Mary Chaudet, Sherri Coleman, Jeanne Derer, Vicki Ewers, Margaret Jackson, Irma Kennebeck, Marge O’Gorman, Susan Scholl, and Sandy Schwartz—joined protesters in front of St. Louis City Hall. Sr. Jeanne Meurer led a prayer service in Marian Chapel with Sr. Rose Mercurio, and countless others lifted their own prayers in solidarity with the climate activists.

The September 20th strike signaled the start of a week of climate activism that involved an estimated 7.6 million people—one of the largest coordinated global demonstrations in history.





Coalition releases new report: *Environmental Racism in St. Louis*

On August 31, a report titled “Environmental Racism in St. Louis” was released by an unofficial coalition of St. Louis community-based groups Arch City Defenders, Action St. Louis, Dutchtown South Community Corporation, and the Sierra Club Missouri Chapter. The report was written by the Washington University Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic, which provides pro bono legal services to local communities facing environmental issues.

The report highlights several primary environmental concerns for residents of St. Louis City: lead poisoning, asthma, mold, air pollution, home energy costs, limited access to healthy food, vacancy, and illegal dumping. This analysis helps us to understand the issues the communities we seek to empower are facing. Pictured right is Myisha Johnson, Dutchtown resident and organizer, sharing at the report release event about the devastating impacts that unjust environmental factors have had on her family.



City Greens welcomes new Market Manager

This August, City Greens hired a new Market Manager, Liz Essman (center), who is excited to help update the Market’s internal systems and do outreach to even more of the Forest Park Southeast community. Your prayers are appreciated for this team in their new season!

Laudato Si’ highlighted at major environmental grantmakers’ conference

Last month, we travelled to California for the Environmental Grantmakers Association retreat to share with and learn from hundreds of like-minded leaders. We were especially excited to witness Tomas Insua, Executive Director of the **Global Catholic Climate Movement** present on the heart and implementation of *Laudato Si’* to a room full of philanthropic leaders and organizers. Many commented on the resonance of the powerful message. Please pray as the Spirit strengthens the growing relationships between the Catholic Church and other faith and climate justice leaders.



GCCM
The Global Catholic
Climate Movement

FSM sponsors Green the Church Summit in St. Louis

On October 4 and 5, church leaders, professionals, academics, students, and community members from near and far gathered at New Northside Missionary Baptist Church for the **Green the Church Summit**. Green the Church is the largest national conference of the Black Church focused on environmental justice and sustainability. Sessions highlighted the new report on *Environmental Racism in St. Louis*, healthy food access through community ownership, water conservation, and how congregations can get engaged. Our own Ryan Strode helped lead a breakout session on strategies for resourcing green movements. A bus tour took visitors to local growing operations, including EarthDance Organic Farm School and Jubilee Community Church's farm. We were inspired by the diverse, passionate voices in the room and grateful that FSM could help make the space for learning and relationship-building available. We ask for your prayers that spirit-led collaboration would result from this meaningful event.



*Rev. David Gerth, Rev. Dr. Starsky Wilson, Myisha Johnson, Leah Clyburn, Tara Rocque, and Tosha Phonix (left-to-right) discuss the recent report *Environmental Racism in St. Louis* and its implications.*

West Lake Updates



On August 19, the Focus Implementation Group hosted an update on the West Lake Landfill with Ed Smith, Policy Director with the Missouri Coalition for the Environment. We learned that the EPA has agreed to remove at least 75% of the radioactivity from the landfill after completing comprehensive groundwater testing over the next two years to determine if further cleanup is warranted. Please join us in thanking the FIG team members, not only for hosting this update, but for their faithful commitment to learning and sharing with all of us throughout their term!

Catholic Energies completes its first massive installation



Catholic Energies, a project of **Catholic Climate Covenant**, provides Catholic organizations expertise and financial resources for installing solar and energy efficiency technology at no cost to them. This summer, they finished a massive, 440-panel project for a parish in southeastern Virginia. The parish is now saving 14% on energy costs. The success of this project has encouraged the development of many more solar projects, including Catholic Charities' ongoing installment of over 5,000 panels in a field near Washington, D.C.

Reflections from the farm

EarthDance Organic Farm School is a buzzing hive of activity. Over 2,000 adults and students visit over the year to learn and connect. The stories of their apprentices, particularly, showcase their impact. Before joining the program, one apprentice, Jake May was arrested for stealing fresh produce from a grocery store. Now, Jake has joined with fellow apprentice Nick Boyd (pictured below) to start a nonprofit connecting their Florissant community to wellness through gardening.



"My sense of community before this didn't exist. (EarthDance) showed me what it feels like to be a part of a community... I don't think I've ever felt the way that I did coming and working with the apprentices on a weekly basis. After this apprenticeship I do want to grow local food in my community, but more than anything I want to help create a sense of community in Florissant... If I never volunteered at EarthDance, I would still be trying to be an entrepreneur in things that didn't necessarily benefit humanity, but benefitted myself."

Jake May, Graduate of the EarthDance Organic Farm School Apprenticeship

Looking for more ways to engage?

Prayer Request: Please pray for our collaborators and the residents of Little Village, where ongoing demolition of a coal-fired power plant is posing significant health risks.

Place to Visit: Old North Provisions, a community grocery store run by our collaborator **Good Life Growing**. The store is located at the corner of N. 14th Street and St. Louis Avenue, and is officially open weekly Thursday & Friday from 2:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Saturday from 10:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m., and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Upcoming Event: On October 23, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., MCE will host a free, premiere screening of "Right to Harm," a documentary on the impacts of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) at Washington University in St. Louis' Risa Commons. Contact Katie or go to Facebook to reserve a seat.

Save the Date: Our next Lunch and Learn, which will include sharing and discussion on environmental justice in the St. Louis area, will be December 2, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. in Assembly Room #2 at The Sarah Community.

If you have questions or comments about this report, please contact Katie Balfany, Program Associate at (314) 768-1650 or kbalfany@fsmonline.org