

**St. James of Jerusalem, Long Beach, NY**  
**Creation Care**

**May 17, 2024**

Our values and programs in Creation Care are based on the belief that the climate crisis is caused by human activity, and that it is already harming life among too many species, including humans – especially among those who are the least to blame for the crisis. If we as a species do not act wisely and immediately, suffering will continue to escalate. Increasing global temperatures, rising seas and extreme weather will cause even more unthinkable economic and humanitarian harm. The cause of this crisis is more than the imbalance in the carbon cycle. The crisis has accelerated because of human greed, social injustice, and the disproportion influence on government policy by corporations and the rich.

St. James' response to the climate crisis has been threefold:

1. To educate ourselves and our community on the nature of the problem, and what the solutions are. We believe there is little ambiguity about what needs to happen to achieve a livable world.
2. To eliminate the emission of heat trapping gases from our buildings. By following the concepts taught in our education and outreach program, we do our part to solve the problem, meanwhile serving as an example in the Diocese and the community at large.
3. Beyond our buildings, the parish has adopted other “green” behaviors. Small groups and individuals are acting in a variety of ways to care for God’s creation.

### **Education and Outreach**

St. James has worked with the Interfaith Association of Greater Long Beach and the Diocese of Long Island to engage a diverse audience by a variety of media.

***This Fragile Earth, our Island Home*** was first presented in the winter of 2021 as a series of six webinars designed to help people learn about the climate crisis – its causes, solutions, and actions to take. Our aim is to empower folks to act to reverse global warming. While our primary audience is the greater Long Beach community, we invite anybody, anywhere to join us. The program is available online at <https://ecopapak.org/FragileEarthIslandHome/InfoPage.htm>.

The **Diocese** has held **two retreats**, at which St. James participated and presented. In October 2022, A half hour presentation, [“What to do \(about global warming\).”](#) laid out the challenges we face. Topics: The Causes. What is the Bold and Urgent Action needed to meet the crisis? What we can do in our parishes, as individual/families/businesses, and how we can Influence Government. In a breakout session, [“A Framework for Parish Action”](#) led by Anna Dengler (All Saints Church, Park Slope) and Coty Keller (Saint James, Long Beach) presented the concepts and tools to be applied in a program to reduce and eliminate parish emissions. One of the important “lessons” in the breakout session was the value – and necessity – of the independent energy audit. An example is the [St. James Energy Audit](#).

At the October 2023 Retreat, a 20-minute presentation, [Reduce/Eliminate Emissions at St. James of Jerusalem Long Beach](#) offered an update on the planning for building updates at our church and rectory. Topics included the underlying principles, scope of work, and how to pay for it.

A highlight of the presentation was a summary of the many money-saving benefits, for houses of worship, households, and businesses, available from state agencies and the federal government through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (the climate law that many people do not know about).

### **Eliminating Building Emissions**

Our goal of achieving zero emissions is a moral issue, based on the damage and injustice suffered by all life from the climate crisis. Our method is an informed problem-solving process, based on the well accepted remedy for building emissions: Conserve energy, electrify everything, and generate power from non-emitting power sources. For us this entails fuel switching - changing from cooking, heating spaces and hot water with natural gas to the use of electric ranges and heat pumps- and generating that electricity from solar energy.

We have already completed a good portion of our emissions elimination project, including:

- Conservation of energy by insulation and air sealing of the Rectory, managing thermostats as recommended by DOE, replacing lighting with LEDs, and installing low flow faucets.
- Fuel switching by using heat pumps (mini-splits) instead of the gas boiler to heat the Church (sanctuary, sacristy, overcroft, and undercroft/basement) and electric dryer in the rectory instead of the previous gas fired dryer.
- Contracting with Harvest Power to obtain 100% of our electricity from their community solar farm.

The table shows the impact of our project on building emissions. Before our Creation Care program, we were emitting about 17 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> each year. We estimate our present emissions to be about 10 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Estimates are based on reading our electricity and gas meters twice a month, calculating our fuel consumption and applying factors provided by the US Energy Information agency.

Year	Tons CO <sub>2</sub> from Electricity	Tons CO <sub>2</sub> from Gas	Total Emissions
Average 2016-20	3.68	13.33	17.01 Tons CO <sub>2</sub>
2023	0.00	10.23	10.23 Tons CO <sub>2</sub>

The key to eliminating our emissions is to stop using fossil fuels altogether. That is the aim of **our current emission elimination plan**. Key jobs in the project are:

- Completion of insulation (Rectory and Church basement ceilings) and Air Sealing the Church.
- Upgrading the electrical distribution system to provide power to new heat, hot water, and cooking systems. The upgrade also has provisions for a level 2 charger for the priest's electric vehicle.
- Heat pump hot water and space heating/cooling for the rectory.
- Electric cooking appliances.

The Bishop's Committee has approved an investment of \$34,000 from our building fund towards the emission reduction project. This is about half of the project's estimated cost. The other half of the project cost will (God willing) be funded by subsidies and rebates from Metro IAF<sup>1</sup> and our utility company, PSEG.

Moving forward with the project depends on getting approval from the Diocesan Trustees (the owners of the property). While managing such a project, with so many organizations involved, will be a challenge, we expect a good outcome and one that can serve as an example for other parishes and the community at large. Non-profit organizations, especially houses of worship should be setting an example for the care of God's creation.

### **Beyond the Buildings**

Fifteen members of the parish joined the Priest in Charge in the summer of 2023 to form the Green Team. Some of the plans and ideas generated by this lively group include:

1. Working to employ recycling and other strategies to use less plastics.
2. Managing the impact of paper with reuse, recycling, and other strategies.
3. Establishing a composting system on the church grounds.
4. Using dishes and silverware at coffee hour instead of single use products. Use the dishwasher instead of cleaning dishes in the sink.

Meanwhile in less formal settings we have acted "green" as a parish. In 2022, we adopted the eating of plant-based foods as part of our Lenten practice. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimate that what we eat, and waste can make a big difference.

We are putting our grounds to work, taking more carbon out of the atmosphere with an emphasis on native plants.

On Oct. 4, 2023, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis released his sixth apostolic exhortation, "Laudate Deum," as a follow-up and addendum to his previous encyclical "Laudato Si'," released in 2015. Several members of our parish engaged in discussion of the Pope's sprawling meditation on man's place on Earth and the spiritual implications of human-caused global warming. For the most part, we agreed with the Pope's denunciation of the scale of emissions from high-consumption cultures and his reminder that the world's poor were paying the price. Our reflections helped ground us in our commitment to do our part by eliminating our building emissions. We look forward to our new priest joining, and leading us, in our Creation Care work.

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<sup>1</sup> Through a contract with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Metro IAF can provide technical and financial support for community institutions that seek to minimize their use of fossil fuels and help advance the state's transition to clean energy.