

## Trinity Church, Washington Virginia's Stewardship of Creation Survey

By Rob Taylor

Trinity Church members strongly agree with the proposition that Christians and the Episcopal Church have a responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation.

That was one of the clearest conclusions suggested by Trinity members who participated in a survey on the subject of stewardship of Creation. The survey of church members was created and circulated by Trinity's Stewards of Creation Committee. A total of 88.2 percent of respondents (45 persons) said they agreed that, "Christians have a responsibility to care for what God created," 78.4 percent (40) of them agreed strongly. Responses to questions about individuals' and the Episcopal Church's responsibility also were strongly affirmative.

The feedback came in March and April to a survey constructed and circulated to the congregation by the Stewardship Committee. Most respondents filled out answers on an Internet poll offered by Survey Monkey. Others wrote in response to paper questionnaires distributed at the church.

The responding 53 members is a sample of the approximately 250 people whom Trinity counts as members of its congregation. Even as the questionnaire revealed majority interest in Christian "stewardship of the earth," it also prompted five respondents to object to the questions. Two said they worried that the church might become active in environmental causes that they oppose.

Alisa Booze Troetschel, chairman of the Stewardship Committee, said the panel has made no plans to do anything. "Before considering any projects, we wanted to see what the members thought we should do," she said.

Presented with a list of specific issues, a majority of members indicated interest in a wide range of local, national and international issues. The largest numbers expressed concern about air pollution, destruction of rain forests, litter, recycling, mass transit, invasive species, oil pollution, mountaintop-removal mining and renewable energy development. By large majorities, respondents believed that neither the countries of the world nor the United States were "doing a satisfactory job of caring for the planet." And 80.7 percent agreed, most of them strongly, that "conservation measures by individuals in their homes, cars and work environment are worth the effort." But a broader number of respondents wanted the church involved in local environmental issues (61.5 percent) than in state, national and international ones (49.1 percent).

The survey indicated that church members are divided on some environmental issues. A total of 60.8 percent (31) of the survey responses agreed, most of them strongly, that "climate change is propelled by manmade emissions." But 21.6 percent (11) of respondents disagreed, or disagreed strongly, with that statement. This difference of opinion is not unusual. A 2010 poll by the Pew Research Center

found 34 percent of Americans blamed climate change on humans, while 18 percent attributed it to natural causes.

Trinity's stewardship panel was founded about a year ago, inspired by a webinar from an organization called Green Faith, which assists churches, synagogues, mosques and other faith-based groups to integrate stewardship of creation into their projects and programs.

Bev Hunter, one of the founding members of the committee, said the group agreed at the outset that it needed "a clear understanding of what are the beliefs and interests of the congregation. Are many members of Trinity interested in study of the theological or moral basis for stewardship?" She wanted to know if the congregation members were interested in local actions or worldwide initiatives of Anglicans or other religious groups.

The committee has discussed the possibility of launching some kind of landscaping project, possibly with native plants, on or near church property. Some members have also raised the idea of forming a discussion group or e-mail list serve. Persons seeking additional information about survey results or the Church's stewardship initiatives should contact Alisa Booze Troetschel through the Church office, [ContactUs@TrinWash.org](mailto:ContactUs@TrinWash.org).