

The Commons

Dear Spiritual Brothers and Sisters,

At the 79th (National) Episcopal Convention (2018), Resolution D053, the Stewardship of Creation with Church-Owned Lands was approved. It states that all dioceses are to use their church land for regenerative agriculture and biodiversity conservation projects and collaborate with other, similar, agencies to follow God's Care for Creation. A direct result of that resolution is a new ministry/outreach program initiated by the Diocese of Western Michigan and Bishop Hoagland's office called the Church Lands pilot cohort.

Since the beginning of 2020, Rich Dykstra and Debbie Murphy have been participating in this pilot project. Meeting virtually during the past year this program brought together church leaders providing them with a platform and a community to help move the church's diverse land holdings towards wiser use. The goal of this project is to help churches all across America to relate to their land holdings in a way that is more faithful to the Gospel, integrating discipleship, ecology, justice and health.

Because we have 10 acres of land, Holy Trinity has a huge role in this endeavor. We are inviting you to learn about our land and explore its future uses and promote our Care for God's Creation.

OUR HISTORY

We have made a video that explains the history of our land. Stretching from the time that native Americans lived here in the Grand River valley, the video includes an actual copy of the deed we received when Holy Trinity acquired this property in 1959. Here's the link:

<http://www.holytrinitywyo.org/index.php/about-holy-trinity/history/>

THE COMMONS

Prior to the COVID19 shutdown this past March, we met with the Vestry to explain the purposes & goals of the Church Lands project. The Vestry agreed to attach a significant name to our property: from now on, our land is known as THE COMMONS. So named because we are a diverse group of Christians who come from many different places, with different backgrounds & different life experiences - but this is our common ground where we all worship together.

FIRST GOAL

Our first goal is to invite all church members to discern and discuss the future uses of our land. We want all members to interact with the land and each other, as well as explore how our interaction proclaims our faith in God.

We are inviting you to attend and participate in the future of Holy Trinity. We will be holding a DISCUSSION FORUM in the near future via ZOOM to discuss the history and the future of THE COMMONS. No matter where you are located throughout the nation this winter – Florida snowbirds included – you can have a voice in planning our future together.

This process will be intentional and with a purpose. We'll discuss:

- The history of our 10 acres and the features of the land: trees, soil, water, boundaries, zoning, etc
- Brainstorming future possibilities: how can we minister to the community?
- How do we utilize THE COMMONS to restore the connection between God, our people, our places?
- What funding sources are available for the variety of possible projects: grants, donations, etc.

We are asking you to share your ideas, thoughts, past experiences. Don't be shy. There are no bad ideas.

When the weather is favorable, we invite you to walk THE COMMONS to get a better sense of its size and its wonder! THE COMMONS is one-quarter mile long from end to end. There are a lot of possibilities here!

“To take the first step in faith, you don't have to see the whole staircase” Martin Luther King Jr.

Rich Dykstra and Debbie Murphy